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**BONG'KWÉ**

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BOOKS BY WYNANT DAVIS HUBBARD  
WILD ANIMALS BONG'KWÉ



# B O N G ' K W É

BY WYNANT DAVIS HUBBARD



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## GLOSSARY

*n'tongwalynyango'nyango* locust bird or white-bellied stork.

*n'vu* native name for hippopotamus, given because of the sound it utters when rising from water.

*oribi* oribi antelope, a small creature weighing about forty pounds when adult.

*pan* a shallow depression in the ground containing water which may be either rain water or occasionally spring water.

*puku* puku antelope.

*puti* a small antelope whose English name is a corruption of the Dutch word for diver, given it from its habit of plunging into the grass headlong when frightened.

*quale* native name for African partridge.

*roan* roan antelope.

*sable* antelope.

*'saka* abbreviation of lusaka.

*s'chenpera* rhinoceros.

*spoor* South African Dutch for tracks.

*steamer* native word for locomotive.

*stitatunga* stitatunga antelope, whose hoofs are exceptionally elongated.

*vlei* an open, shallow valley or depression between the bush-covered rolling country.

**BONG'KWÉ**





## CHAPTER I

“**T**AO *saba, tao saba tse’foro tse’foro . . . Tao saba, tao saba tse’foro tse’foro . . .*”<sup>1</sup>

Rising, now dying, crooning as if blown away into the immensity of the night, the song floated against the circle of huts. Near me, as I sat listening and watching, a native thrust a dry branch onto a fire. The flames, crackling up, played for a moment upon the dull sheen of grass-roofed huts. Coppered skins glowed moistly. An eyeball gleamed white and round.

“*Tao saba, tao saba tse’foro tse’foro . . .*”

The fire died and the huts faded into a dark line marching in a wide circle into the darker blackness of the night. The eye gleamed, but jerkily, as it rolled to the swing of the song. A tom-tom throbbed

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<sup>1</sup>“Look out, all game, look out, for a lion is walking abroad.”

softly. Responding, the song rose shrilly. The swaying, clapping men grunted a hoarse, barking accompaniment. Dust swirled about the dancers as their feet thumped and scraped excitedly across the earth. Africa pouring its heart, its very soul, into the night.

"*Tao saba . . . boom, boom,*" throbbed the drum. "*Tao saba, tao saba tse'foro tse'foro. Oom, oom—oom, oom,*" grunted the men. "*Tao saba . . .*"

To-night no lion roared its agreement. But because no lion spoke the song did not cease. The game, even if wandering within sound of the words, did not need the warning. They as well as the natives knew full well that lions were abroad, stalking through the bush or standing silent by the edge of an open vlei<sup>2</sup> watching for some betraying movement and scenting the barely moving air as it drifted past their nostrils.

Half a moon rose slowly from the black heart of the veld. Gradually the huts defined themselves against the sky. The stars lost their hard brilliance and a single ivory palm emerged from the background and stood sentinel on the far edge of the

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<sup>2</sup>A glossary of native words and expressions will be found in the front pages of the book.

cultivated mealie lands surrounding the village. Somewhere under the dark horizon which was the bush veld a hopeless hyena whooped dismally as it loped along on its endless search for bones. The village dogs barked a derisive answer. For what reason it was difficult to understand. One, standing in the light from a grass torch with its back hair menacingly stiff, looked too thin and gaunt to be able to boast.

A woman stretched on a mat beside a bed of coals stirred uneasily and clutched the baby beside her more tightly. The whoop sounded again, perhaps a little nearer. She was awake now. Hyenas are feared. She rose to her knees and blew the fire, pushing the ends of the logs closer together so that they flickered uncertainly. With a glance towards the bush she lay down and gathered her child to her breast. There was a tale told by certain old men and women that ghosts, the spirits of dead persons of uncertain reputation, rode the night on the backs of hyenas. It was not known for truth as few would admit meeting such a pair. But why should the hyena have such strong feet unless to carry a burden? And why should it lope so ceaselessly all the night and laugh so hideously over the

finding of some dirty bone or remnant of stinking meat? Truly they are animals accursed driven to whoop and laugh by some unknown devilment. The woman shivered slightly and then relaxed.

Well might that hyena take the words of the song to heart. The lion entertains no illusions. To him the hyena is merely a skulker, a follower of royalty to be cuffed and clawed if he approaches too close, to be killed contemptuously by a bite through the backbone if caught scurrying from a kill.

The moon was well up. A tiny light threw sharp shadows which were here and there softened by the yellow light from fires built around the cattle kraal which formed the circular heart of the village. In the area between the poles of the kraal and line of huts lay milk gourds, cheelies, pounding sticks, pots, all the implements of native life. Dropped at the end of the day as the sun set, they would be taken up again to-morrow for the ceaseless round of work which alone produces food.

Around each little heap of embers sat several natives. Their carved-legged stools, polished from much sitting, cut the flickering embers into fantastic cookie-tin shapes. Half around the bend of the



circle from where I sat the dance was going on. Figures moved and swayed to the rhythm of the tom-tom and the song. A gracefully stiff figure would detach itself suddenly from the group and posturing, then wildly throwing itself about, dance out the exuberance of its heart and then as suddenly melt into the clapping line.

*Tao saba, tao saba, tse'foro tse'foro—oom—oom—  
tao saba . . .*

On and on. No beginning and no ending, but satisfying beyond most white men's comprehension to these black and copper inhabitants of the veld. Even to the unsympathetic the thrill of the rhythm of a drum is almost irresistible. Me, it caused to dream—to float away on thoughts that were not possible, which could never be.

A figure rose from a group between me and the dancers. As it came towards me I recognized the crooked figure and shuffle walk of my chief tracker. He was an old man, yet still wonderfully keen. Crippled some years before in what resolved itself to be a life-and-death battle with a bull buffalo, Shamanyati had been forced to give up actual hunting and had attached himself to me as guide, tracker, friend and instructor. But although we

had been together for several years I had never heard the story of his battle save in scraps from other people. There had been no witnesses. He was of the type which hunts alone.

Squatting on his heels in front of me, he looked up with a quizzical smile on his flat pock-marked face.

"You hear, I'nkos?" he queried, nodding towards the singers.

"Yes, I hear," I answered. "Yet it is not all true. Some animals need not fear the lion even though he roamed all day."

"It is even so," he replied. "Big Feet [elephant], he with the serpent between his eyes, and s'chempera [rhinoceros], of the two horns and voice like the voice of a steamer [locomotive], as it begins to move, they need not fear." A wistful look flitted across his face. "Neither," he continued softly—"neither need the buffalo, the big men buffalo who go alone, nor the old infasis who lead the herd and teach the little ones. Well do I remember the scars that Bong'kwé bore upon his neck and shoulders." Unconsciously his hand stole up and gently touched the knotted scar which was all that remained of the wide wound which the goring horn of the buffalo had torn through his shoulder.

"Bong'kwé," he began again—"Bong'kwé feared nothing. Not even me, Shamanyati, the killer of buffalo. And if he feared not me, who have killed many, many buffalo, why should he fear the lion who kills but few and those too old or too young to fight?" He spat disgustedly. "The lion——"

Around us the air throbbed to the beat of the tom-tom and the words of the song rose and fell about us. Yet we heard them not. Each was far away, wandering amongst the memories of half-forgotten days among the animals of the veld.

"It is a long tale, I'nkos," Shamanyati suddenly broke the silence. "But it is worth the telling because it tells of Bong'kwé, and it was Bong'kwé who gave me these," pointing to his scars, "and who caused me to walk lame for the remainder of my years even though in the end I killed him."

And so, with the song rising and falling behind us, I heard the story of Bong'kwé. Dust eddied around and the fires died out, to be replenished stingily. The tom-tom throbbed, but we were aware of none of these things because Bong'kwé was, of his kind, a leader. Great in his strength and even greater in his death, a lonely, monstrous creature superb in his self-reliance.

## CHAPTER II

"**H**is mother was very fat, for the grass was long and beginning to seed when Bong'kwé was born." Shamanyati began as he shuffled his heels to settle himself more comfortably on his haunches. "The heavy rains were coming to an end. Few men leave the villages at this time, for there is much work to be done in the gardens, as you know, I'ukos. Besides the grass is wet and showers water on the traveller's head. Much water flows on the ground, which is slippery and soft. It is cold, and the cold brings the fever, and the fever requires the eating of much quinine which is not good.

"The veld is not clear then as it is now, when the hunter can see the white rump of the hartebeest far in the distance." It was then September. Months before, the grass had dried out and been



burnt. The country was barren and the trees carried few leaves. In the bush veld one could see hundreds of yards under the bare crooked trees. The veld was like an abandoned apple orchard save for the ant-hills, which resembled huge mole-hills patted firm and planted with small sticks and little bushes as a child might do in play.

“The game comes then to the high ground, and although food is plentiful in the bush the animals come to the gardens and rob us during the night. During the night, did I say? Nay, they come even when the sun is high, for the grass affords cover and the leaves are thick. Around the gardens deep trenches are dug to stay the bush-pig. What stupid fellows they are! If once they fall in the trench, round and round they go and we kill them in the morning with spears. If they do get out it is a chase for the dogs. But the dogs fear the bush-pig greatly, for he is a mighty fighter and kills many before a spear slides in between his ribs. Parrots come to be chased away, and all the little chirping birds, only to be scared by jerking the ropes of bark stretched over the grain from tree to tree and hung with gourds filled with small stones and with feathers from eagles or vultures. No, it is not a season when

a man has time to wander far in the bush. For the women cannot frighten away the eland and the hippopotamus, nor can they do all the hoeing which the growing of good yams and mealies require. Wood for fire is not easy to find, water must be carried, grain pounded, and the cattle must be driven out to graze and returned at night to the kraal for safety and for milking. No, decidedly it is not a time of leisure, a season when a man can spend many days finding the homes and roads of game in order to dig pitfalls or to stretch snares. And of what use would be pits? Only to catch water when water is plentiful. Digging for it at such a time would mark a man a fool indeed.

“I had five wives, for I made much from the sale of meat which I killed. Many hoes and pots were brought to me, for Shamanyati was well known and I was rich with many things and had goats and cattle nearly equal to the chief himself. So I used to go upon the veld more than most. But I did not wander, for I knew the minds of the animals. To certain places they would go for grass. The sable loves to crop the young leaves of the small green bush that grows in hard ground. The kudu, he of the little feet and great bounds, prefers

the shadows of the lusakas and comes forth only when the sun has passed its height and throws long shadows. The roan and eland wander much. Even in the open where there is nothing save grass do they go. Only by climbing on the ant-hills and watching for long can one find them by the tips of their horns moving above the grass. These things and many others I knew, so that I was successful in my hunting, and the fame of Shamanyati grew not less even at such a time when the grass was so high that you, riding on your horse, would not be above it."

Shamanyati ceased speaking. Reaching to his wide leather belt studded with the broad bright heads of brass and aluminum upholstery tacks, he loosed the tiny gourd in which he carried his snuff. Pulling the stopper, he poured out a teaspoonful into the palm of his hand, and carefully restoppering the gourd, returned it to his belt. With the beaten iron spoon which hung from his neck by a strong chain he carried two heaping spoonfuls to his nose, one to each nostril, inhaling deeply. It was strong stuff; tobacco ground fine and mixed with the roasted and ground pods of the mahogany tree. But it was several moments before he sneezed

violently. Spitting contentedly he resumed his story.

“You remember the two pans which lie close together at the end of the vlei near the palms where we found many zebras and hartebeest not so very long ago?” I nodded agreement. “I was hunting along the edge of the 'saka near the pan which is the deeper of the two. There were the trails of many buffalo there, for cover from the sun was present near by, and the sweet grass between the pans was rich and plentiful. I was sitting on an ant-hill waiting for a hartebeest or zebra. My arrows, ready dipped in poison, lay across my ankles. The sun was nearing its height. It was the time when the buck prefer to drink if they think no man is near to hurt them. The narrow trails flattened in the grass by the feet of the buffalo passed on each side of me, and I had hopes that before the sun should begin to sink I should have cut the poison meat from my buck. Buffalo I was not thinking about. I knew that long ere then they had left the pan and were now lying in the heart of the 'saka sleeping or chewing lazily on their cuds. Some might still be standing rubbing their sides against a tree, but it was near the heat of the day and buffalo



are very sleepy then. Behind me the 'saka was very thick. Even so,"—and he laid his hands together, their fingers apart so that I could barely see between them. "From there came a noise. I turned slowly, as it was a noise I had not heard before, and I knew not what animal to expect. It sounded like the noise a man might make if he tried to bellow deeply with his head inside a pot. It came again. Then a third time, but more clearly than before. Undoubtedly it was a bellow of a buffalo, but of a tone I had never heard before. It was very like the bellow of a buffalo that has been wounded badly. Yet there was no fight in it. Almost it sounded as if its utterer had put its head down an ant-bear hole to hide the noise. As if it were afraid.

"I listened hard for other sounds, but there were none, nor was the bellow repeated. So interested did I become in this strange noise that I nearly missed a hartebeest that came walking slowly past my ant-hill. But the arrow went well home and, sure that before the hartebeest could run far the poison would work, I stood up and marked in my mind the spot wherefrom the bellow had come. There had been nothing to disturb that buffalo—an arrow does not make such a noise as

your gun—nor had I moved save to draw the string. Then I went after my hartebeest, and finding him still walking slowly, hedged him toward the village. He died before he could go much farther, and after cutting out the head of my arrow I went to call people to carry in the meat.

“The next morning very early I returned to the ant-hill from which I had shot the hartebeest. It took me much longer to reach it than on the first day because I had to go warily. The buffalo were not together in large herds as at this season. I moved cautiously along the very edge of the 'saka where the grass, because of the shade, was not so tall and thick. Moving thus I met no animals save a puti, which stood and stared at me a moment and then dove into the grass, vanishing as does a man diving into water.

“When I reached my ant-hill I sat down upon it and waited. The sun rose higher and the dew which had starred the tops of the grass dried out. I grew warm and comfortable and forgot the chill of the stalk along the 'saka. Nothing stirred for a long time.

“Then a heavy beast moved in the 'saka above me. A damp stick broke with a dull watery snap,

Some large animal was leaving the shade and shelter of the thick stuff to go to the pans. I watched the trails above me, for I judged it would come out there. The grass swayed, and the swaying moved along what must have been a trail, but I could see nothing. All that could be detected was the movement of the grass and the swish and suck of feet planted firmly in the watery ground. There are only two animals that move so deliberately, the eland and the buffalo. It was a buffalo that was passing, for had it been an eland I should have seen the tips of its horns above the swaying of the grass.

“Then the explanation of the curious bellow and of this mid-day journey came to my mind. What I had heard were the labor pains of a cow buffalo. Even then as I watched she was leaving her calf and going down for what was probably her first drink since its birth, leaving it secure in the belief that no man was about and in the knowledge that preying animals seldom walk abroad in the heat of the day.

“I left my ant-hill, and sliding quickly through the grass, cut the spoor of the buffalo I had heard but had not seen. Backtracking was easy and soon,

just under the first thick branches, the tracks showed clean and new. It had been a cow that I had heard. I pushed in. The tracks led back toward the ant-hill close to the edge of the 'saka. The cow was wise. She had not stepped out into the open until sure nothing lurked in wait. Not far along she had circled, and the tracks led deep into the bush. In some places I had to crawl. Never could I stand erect. It was real buffalo 'saka, dense and dark with leaves and tangled vines and bushes—the type of 'saka to which elephants go when hunted hard and in which a man must crawl looking for the sight of a bit of tusk or (the grayish nothing of a leg.) Almost all the distance through the 'saka I followed until the tracks turned sharp again and led toward the end of the 'saka which jutted out into the long grass near the palms. There on ground that rose slightly and was surrounded by several mahogany trees I found the calf lying in the sun which filtered through the bigger trees. It did not get up and I did not go too near. Ordinarily I would have killed such a find and taken it back to the village, for the meat of a young calf is very sweet though bloodless. But this one I spared. Why, I know not exactly, save that to my eyes it

seemed to promise much as to size and its coat was very dark. Most buffalo calves, as you know, I'nkos, are brown at birth and have hair the color of the heart of the mahogany tree when the sap is in it. But this calf was dark, almost the color of mabunga! So I spared it, and not wishing to be found there by its mother, left it and left also the 'saka, coming out on the side farthest from the ant-hill. Circling around I found another ant-hill from which I could see the pans. Although I had hoped to see the cow I could not. I could hear the splash of water as she waded in the grass and grazed, but only her back did I see. The little I saw of that was hairless and gray. An old cow and huge. That was all I saw and learned, but it was the birth of Bong'kwé I had heard and it was he I spared. Later when the time came for us to battle together neither gave nor asked for mercy, and both of us nearly died, just as both of us at our first meeting had lived."



### CHAPTER III

“**U**NLIKE other game the calves of buffalo do not immediately join the groups of larger animals. For the first day or two they are not strong. This is true also of the kwalata, which does not take its calf to the herd at once but guards it jealously for at least a day. But hartebeest I have seen running with a herd so small and so young they looked still wet from their mother’s first licking. So too with the zebra.

“Often as I sit concealed waiting for game to come within reach of my bow I think of these things and wonder at them. For there is little difference between the young of animals and the young of man. It is only by being hurt that the young learn the meaning of things. How else, save from its mother, can a young buffalo learn the

meaning in the cries of the plover at night? How is it to know that that shrill yelp from a bird may mean the stealthy presence of lions? What indeed does it know of lions? How does it learn unless the lions attack and it escapes trembling and carrying forever after the stench of lion in its nostrils? And what is the difference between such an experience and one of our own children crawling toward a fire? The coals are pretty and the little flames dance nicely. Is the child to know that what it crawls to is fire and that fire burns and even kills just as lions claw and bite and kill? It can only learn by being burnt. Its mother may snatch it away, but it has not learned. Neither does a calf learn by following the stampede of its mother fleeing from the smell or sound of a lion.

“Once when I was sitting by a pan a lion came down to drink. He was a big lion and full of himself. Very slowly he approached the water, and lowering his head drank noisily with sharp, quick laps. Watching him I felt indeed that he was a great man, one of whom to be afraid. Then quite suddenly he stiffened, and turning his great furred head sniffed the air. Two huge silent bounds and he stood by the base of a crooked tree. Another

bound and he was in a crotch, standing with his forefeet on a limb. The black tip of his tail twitched slightly as if he were nervous.

“I gazed astounded. Could he have smelt me? But no. If he had he would have looked in my direction, growling and showing those nasty, massive teeth. I watched. A moment later two wild dogs came trotting down to drink. They looked even more unconcerned and sure than did the lion. They were not panting nor were they very thirsty, for when they struck the path of the lion they stopped and smelt at it intently and, sniffing, followed it down to the water. Without more ado they drank, and one walked deep into the pan and wet himself all over by lying down. For perhaps the length of time it takes you to smoke a cigarette, I'nkos, the dogs stayed in the water. Then they trotted off. All that time the lion had stayed in the crotch of his tree, only his tail moving a little as he watched the dogs. After they had gone and their black and yellow coats had disappeared amongst the trees the lion bounded down and walked off. He did not return whence he had come, nor did he begin that moaning roar that a lion full of meat and water loves to utter as he wanders from his

drink, looking for a place to lie down which is shaded from the sun."

I moved in my chair and Shamanyati looked up. My pipe had gone out. As I reached for my pouch to refill it he rose to his feet and shuffled to the fire. Bending over he knocked out a coal, and picking it up, brought it to me, juggling it from palm to palm. My pipe filled, he placed the coal on the bowl and I settled back to listen.

"Indeed, I'nkos, there is much that goes on in the bush that we do not know and much of that life is like our own. For truly that lion was like a chief. He was strong and big and much to be feared. Yet when the little dogs came he leaped to safety as would a chief were his people to become angry and hunt him out. Surrounded by his wives and relations, a chief travels from village to village. Seldom is he alone, and he never will eat food that has not been prepared by his wives. Surely the lion is much the same. It is not he who rules the veld, nor is it the chief who rules the people. Rather it is those that run in packs, for they are many. If one or even several are killed their deaths are not of great consequence. Young are born and learn and are hurt. They grow up to love and breed

and die just as we do. Of these things I think much while waiting for game—because a man can think and still keep a lookout. Thoughts do not make a noise to disturb the game, and a man cannot sit all day doing nothing.

“So for the next day or two I wondered about the buffalo calf which I had found. It had lain there so quietly, gazing at me from big eyes so new they could not well distinguish what I was even had they known. Its coat had been licked smooth. Its ears, large and fringed, lay on the ground on each side of its slick head without a move. It knew nothing except the smell of its mother and the warmth of her milk. But I knew that before another two nights had passed the calf would be gone from the 'saka and would be following its mother as she moved, grazing with other buffalo. Probably the old cow took her calf away much sooner than she would have done had I not found it. For she must have smelt my trace. Whether upon discovery that I had found her calf she had hunted for me I do not know, because, as I have told you, I left the 'saka to avoid her return. Buffalo are not like lions. A lion will follow a man's spoor to see what has become of him. Most likely that cow, when she returned



and found the smell of man lying heavy on her tracks, had hurried to the spot where she had left her calf. Fear was in her, for she was old and wise and knew that man was not good, that danger and wounds and blood followed his smell. When she found the calf where she had left it I believe that it occupied all her thoughts. Smelling it and licking it, she glared around the clearing. Maybe she investigated the surrounding bush, but finding nothing, returned to her calf, which had struggled to its feet. Standing still so that her man-child could drink, she watched the bush of the 'saka and scented every whiff of wind that came her way.

“All day she stayed there. But that night she moved. Whither I do not know, but I do not think she left the 'saka, for it is a big one and very dense and filled with many buffalo. Although the calf was weak it followed her as she moved up the length of thick bush. In places there were paths and the going was not so difficult. But in others there were many vines that clutched at those wobbly legs and often Bong'kwé made mistakes and bumped into trees. Once he even stuck, and only after much labored wriggling did he manage to extricate himself from between the binding trunks.

“I know that the buffalo left the point of the 'saka, because a day or two after finding the calf I returned there and they had gone. Although I searched hard I could not determine the day they left. When hiding their young, animals leave few traces. It was hard to believe that there, in this spot, had been born a buffalo. The freshest of the tracks led up the middle of the 'saka, but I did not follow them, for I had been in that place before and knew too well its denseness and its difficulties. It is not an old 'saka with tall trees except at its pointed end. It is one of the new 'sakas. The trees are low and the brush underneath grows thick and leafy. Most of it is not the height of an elephant's back—not the type of 'saka into which a man would follow a buffalo, particularly a cow with her young calf. Not even I, Shamanyati, would go in there, although you and I together, I'nkos, might do so, because you have your gun, the Witch-doctor, which hits so hard, unlike my arrows, which only prick.

“With that first night journey Bong'kwé's life and education began. For he learned on that journey. Perhaps not much, but certainly how to move his legs. Before he reached the end he had

found out that there were many things which he must avoid if he would walk. He did not understand all this, but before his mother stopped he avoided most of the trees and watched for sticks and logs lying across the trail.

“Many sounds and smells came to him—all new and to his baby nostrils all exciting and perplexing: the scrape of branches against his mother’s back, the dull pressing thud of her feet, the wet smell of leaves, and every now and then smells which stood out above all others but which meant nothing to his little brain. Possibly they crossed the spoor of a honey badger on the prowl for grubs or a bees’ nest. There were kudu too. The smallish tracks wound to and fro the length of the ’saka as the antelope moved about feeding on the tender young leaves found on the lower parts of the trees and bushes. A quale may have darted from a tree to racket off to a safer perch. Once a faintly familiar smell came drifting to him. Although Bong’kwé did not realize that it was so, his mother was taking him to the haunts of others of his kind. That familiar smell which was like, but yet unlike, his mother came from his aunts and cousins.

“At last his mother stopped. Bong’kwé stood

wearily beside her, his head drooping and his great buffalo ears hanging limp and disconsolate. He was tired, oh, so tired, and that chunk of a body was so heavy on those short, sturdy-looking legs. Although he was a buffalo he was not yet three days old and the journey had been long and difficult for him. He turned around, and nudging his mother began to nurse. The warm milk running down his throat tasted good. His ears lost a little of their limpness and twitched with the pleasure of food."



"A new sound stole over the 'saka, a faint pattering as of many tiny feet clogging rapidly. It increased and became louder. The air quickly turned colder and a breeze blew through the bushes. Rain, the cold early morning rain that chills to the marrow. Bong'kwé stopped nursing and tried to listen but he was so sleepy. Water ran down the sides of his mother. When he thrust his head against her stomach to nurse again the water ran down over his head and into his eyes. It dripped from the end of his nose and the fringes on his ears. He shook his head and rain seeped into the hairs of his baby coat and touched his skin. He twitched at the touch



AND THEN I SAW BONG'KWÉ. HE WAS STANDING ON THE  
EDGE OF THE PAN. . .





of it. How cold and uncomfortable he was! He tried nursing again but the rain was coming down hard now and he had to give up the attempt. Crowding close against his mother's side for what warmth he could get, Bong'kwé stood leaning some of his weight against the big buffalo.

"Thus they stood together until the pattering ceased and only the leaves dripped. A faint light stole through the 'saka, and then faded again. It grew colder but these two standing so still moved not at all. Heads hanging low and ears drooping, they remained motionless until the real dawn flushed the sky behind them and showed the steaming earth and the leaves wet and shiny and the branches speckled with drops of water.

"When the sun began to show itself above the trees across the vlei, the cow moved. With barely a sound she turned and started making her way toward the edge of the 'saka nearest the pans. There were trails here and Bong'kwé, following behind, found the walking much easier than before. There was light by which he could see, and although branches snapped against his sides and there were occasional deep hoofprints to avoid, he kept pace with his mother. The distance was not so great as

on that long journey of the night, and the effort warmed his body. He did not feel so cold.

“The bush thinned. The sun streamed through the trees, which were larger and more widely spaced. The ground was covered here and there by tall slender clumps of stuff at which his mother cropped as she passed. It was grass, but beyond the fact that it was soft and did not hurt him when he stepped into it, it meant nothing to Bong'kwé.

“Then his mother stopped. Nudging Bong'kwé gently, she stood over him, licking his back. He was tired and in some fashion understood he was to lie down. Doubling up his forelegs he let his body sink down and lay contentedly with his feet under him and the sun playing warmly on his neck. His mother stood by him for a time, her broad back, dark from the rain, steaming slightly. Then suddenly she moved away and Bong'kwé was alone. He stretched his head out and lay quiet, listening to the soft noises of the veld awakening after a night of rain. He was sleepy and before long his eyes closed, and save for an occasional twitching of an ear a passer-by would never have suspected life in that dark brown mass blending so well with the brown of the fallen leaves.”

## CHAPTER IV

**S**HAMANYATI had ceased speaking. For a few minutes we sat silent, gazing into the night. The moon was almost overhead. The shadows around the kraal had shortened to narrow black edgings. The sleeping natives, sprawled on their mats, looked grotesque and hard as if carved from some dark, shiny marble. The song still rose and fell. *Tao saba, tao saba tse'foro. Tao saba, tao saba tse'foro.* Boom, boom, boom, boom throbbed the tom-tom. I knocked out my pipe. It had long since been out. Shamanyati looked up at the sound and started to rise for another coal, but as I shook my head he settled down again and resumed his story.

“I did not see Bong'kwé again for a long time. During the season of the long grass it is not often

that the hunter sees the calves of game. Indeed he is fortunate if he can find the old animals, for it is a time for much nervousness. Every animal is constantly on the alert. Do they not spend all their days walking in deep canyons of grass, the walls of which may burst asunder at any step to launch roaring death? How would you and I feel, I'nkos, if we were forced to spend so many days amongst grass over which we could not see? Indeed it is a nervous life, as well we know, we who have hunted together in the long grass of the flats."

He looked up, a smile of grim reminiscence playing around the corners of his mouth. "You remember the day we followed the five elephant cows into a big patch of long grass?"

I nodded vigorous agreement. It would be long before I forgot that day. We had spooed that little herd for hours and just before noon had halted on the edge of a great vlei covered with rank grass growing ten and twelve feet high. Into it the trail of the elephants had disappeared. Should we go in or should we not? Elephants usually stand up during the heat. It was more than likely that they were even then standing somewhere in that sea of grass. Cow elephants with calves at foot are not inclined



to be friendly. It had required some minutes of argument to screw up our courage, but we went in. The narrow trail we followed wound backwards and forwards. We could see neither to the right nor to the left. On each side rose an impenetrable wall of yellow grass. Above us the tops waved gently in the slight breeze. The stench of heat-sodden, moldering vegetation hung in our nostrils. Slowly, infinitely slowly, we crept along balancing our weight first on one foot and then another as we walked. I had to shift my rifle from one hand to another, my palms were so wet with the sweat of excitement and anticipation. Suddenly to our right somewhere behind that wall of grass there was a rush. We heard the grass swishing against heavy bodies. Feet pounded on the earth. The hair at the base of my neck prickled and the skin grew cold. I whirled towards the sound and gripped my rifle convulsively. Shamanyati was backing slowly away, his eyes starting in a vain effort to see into the grass. For a moment I knew fear, the real chilling fear that a trapped animal must feel. Then sense returned and we knew that those animals rushing by could not be elephants, for elephants' feet make no sound on the earth. Yes, I remem-

bered. I nodded again and Shamanyati resumed his tale.

“You were afraid then, I’nkos. I, too, was afraid. Because we could not see, and that which one cannot see is always terrifying. So it is not difficult to understand why the animals of the veld are nervous. For many moons they must live and move among such grass. If we who had rifles were frightened, what must they feel who spend not only day but night as well in such unseeable country?

“So it is not a matter to be wondered at that I did not see Bong’kwé soon again. Indeed it was not until we were eating green mealies in the village that I saw him. The rains were over. The grass was still long, and in place of the water which it had showered upon my head the grass shed its spearlike seeds, which stuck and prickled.

“I had not been to the two pans near the palm trees for many, many days. It is not wise to frequent the same spot too often. Hartebeest are common there, and unless hunted constantly do not move. So I was as confident as a hunter can be of finding a hartebeest at which to shoot my arrow if I chose my position well. But when I

reached the ant-hill where I had been sitting when I heard the bellow heralding Bong'kwé's birth, the wind was not in my favor. I could not stay there. So I went around and sat on an ant-hill from which I could see the pans and the stretch of sweet short grass between them.

"All day I sat there. When the sun was high and hot some zebra appeared from out of the long grass opposite me. I watched them for a long time as they grazed and splashed about in the short water at the edge of the pans. They remained even when some wildebeest came down, drank, and then disappeared again, their long tails swishing behind them. I would have tried to stalk those zebra had the grass between the pans been higher. To have gone around would have been a waste of time. The wind would have carried my scent straight to the animals. So I sat on, watching keenly for some chance of approaching near enough to loose an arrow.

"A zebra raised her head, and pricking her ears, stood motionless, except for a brief swishing of her tail, looking at the rising wall of grass beyond the pans. Others, seeing her attitude or hearing the same sound, also listened. The stallion whistled his

hoarse, barking neigh and the herd moved away and then stood again on the farther edge of the short grass.

“I watched and listened intently for any sounds which might tell me what it was the zebra heard and smelt. For they clearly knew what it was that was coming. Then out of the grass as if from behind a curtain stepped a buffalo. Others came, crowding beside the leader. The little flat became covered with buffalo. There were old, grayish, hairless ones and young ones whose horns curved sharply from their heads. Here and there I could see a calf running close beside its mother. There were bellows and grunts. The big buffalo crowded into the water, splashing noisily. One lay down with a great splash, and having covered itself with water, stood up, and lowering its head, hooked at the grass and mud as if it wished to show the great muscles of its neck.

“And then I saw Bong'kwé. He was standing on the edge of the pan watching his mother, who was feeding and wading near the middle. I had been right in my guess that he promised greatness. His coat, darker than that of the other calves, had already lost some of its baby sheen. His horns I could

see even from my distant seat. They showed about the length of half a thumb. And he was taller than his fellows. As I watched him standing there I could see that he was to grow into one of those long-legged buffalo that are seen occasionally. I was glad in my heart that I had spared him when I had found him lying so new and unknowing in the heart of the 'saka.

“I looked for the zebra, but they had gone. Never have I seen other game mix with buffalo as I have often seen zebra and wildebeest or hartebeest and roan. I turned my eyes back to Bong'kwé. He was standing still, his head hanging low and his ears lazily moving back and forth. As he slowly swung his head I could see that he was watching his mother as she moved about, looking for tender mouthfuls of grass. Doubtless he was pondering why his mother chose to go into water, that queer stuff which to him must have felt so cold and uncomfortable. I wondered how much he had learned concerning the life of the veld since I had seen him that first morning. Already he was beginning to have that confident air that is so characteristic of the buffalo. Chunky, high-shouldered, and powerful-legged, it was easy to see that he would



never grow into such a nervous flighty creature as a kudu or a wildebeest.

“As I sat there watching I thought of the things that Bong'kwé must have learned. For the first few days after his mother had led him up the 'saka during the night he had been content to nurse and rest. But after that what? His mother could not talk to him. Even if she had been able to speak, her calf could not have understood her any more than one of our babies can understand its mother when she talks. A calf learns much by watching, but most of all it learns from its own experiences.

“One morning his mother took Bong'kwé with her when she went to the pans to drink and feed. The little buffalo plodding along behind was not wondering where he was going, or speculating about the different type of country in which he found himself. Grass he had seen and smelt and felt before. Of the fact that the trees had been left behind he was probably aware, but he was not reasoning as you and I might reason under such circumstances, I'nkos. Animals are not made like us.

“The journey from the 'saka to the pans was short. When his mother stepped from the long grass out on the stretch of short sweet grass I think

Bong'kwé followed without realizing that he was coming upon anything with which he was not familiar. Then he stopped abruptly. For the comparatively few days that he had been alive he had been surrounded constantly by bushes or grass and now suddenly there was nothing—only the bright sunshine playing softly on the gently moving grass. Slowly he looked about him. His mother he could see just ahead of him as she grazed contentedly. He was not afraid, for as yet he knew nothing of fear. That there were such things as lions and leopards, snakes and men, he did not know. Had a lion bounded at him that moment he would not have been sufficiently wise to run. If his mother had dashed away Bong'kwé would have followed her, but not because he would have known she was leading him away from hurt. So he gazed about him unafraid and looked at the short grass underfoot and back at the tall grass from which he had just come. His mother was moving closer to the pan, and as Bong'kwé started to follow she waded out into the shallow water and lowered her head to drink long and noisily.

“Bong'kwé followed. He was hungry, as calves almost always are. That shiny stuff in which his

mother stood meant nothing to him. But as he stepped on it, it gave, letting his foot down with a jerk onto the ground beneath. He stopped, puzzled, and gazed at his mother standing so solid and unconcerned. Then he ventured another step, but again there was no substance under his hoof and he came down with a bump. His feet felt wet and cold, as his back had felt when the rain pattered through the trees. The old cow was paying no attention to him. Wheeling abruptly, Bong'kwé plunged out of the water and climbed upon solid ground. Once there he wandered around a little, but the sun was hot on his back and made him lazy. Besides he was hungry and a little tired. So he lay down, moving his head to keep his mother in sight as she fed up and down the border of the pan.

“Conscious that the sun was high and that possibly man, the destroyer, might be abroad, the big cow ceased her feeding and waded out of the water to the place where her calf lay dozing in the warm sunlight. Without a sound from either Bong'kwé scrambled to his feet, and butting his mother, tried to nurse. But she would have none of it. Nudging her child gently, she moved towards

the long grass, and entering, disappeared up one of the buffalo trails, Bong'kwé following at her heels. Once arrived at their spot in the 'saka his mother stood patiently chewing her cud while Bong'kwé nursed his fill. The warm milk made him sleepy, and after standing motionless for a few moments the drowsy calf sank down on his knees and then doubling up lay down and dreamily fell asleep. His mother stood for a while longer. But the sun was hot and the air close and still. She lay down but not to sleep. With the calf sleeping soundly and the cow dozing and waking to listen and chew her cud, the heat of the day passed and the sun sank. Then, I'nkos, the real veld life awakens and danger and death walk abroad.

“In that 'saka were many creatures besides the buffalo. Little mongooses with long white tails hunted for grubs and lizards around the clumps of thick shrubs or under the leaves which lay everywhere underfoot. Bush cats and servals slid along the trails hunting unwary quales or the nests of kancherries. They did not venture close to the buffalo, for great is the wrath of these huge beasts toward anything that by scent even remotely suggests the dreaded lion or leopard. Yet Bong'kwé

grew to know of these companions of the veld. Their smell drifted to his nostrils or he picked up their scent as he followed his mother back and forth. Once or twice he even caught a glimpse of one as it scurried out of the way.

“The big belligerent bush-pig also roamed the 'saka. Early in the morning Bong'kwé would often hear a big boar grunting to his family as they rooted up the grass growing along the 'saka's edge, or dug with their hard noses for the potato-like roots of certain bushes.

“Thus day by day Bong'kwé learned new smells and new sounds. Birds chattered about him and mice squeaked under the leaves. But it was seldom that another animal except his mother was seen by his yet bluish eyes. All small creatures fly before the bulk and monstrous head and horns of the buffalo. Indeed even the lion must be driven by fierce hunger before he will face such a bitter antagonist. For a buffalo is a great fighter and wise and skillful in battle, although timid where the scent or sound of man prevails.

“Only a few smells did Bong'kwé connect with certain happenings or certain creatures which flashed before him. Birds he knew were inconse-



quential things, knowledge which he would learn was incorrect when the tick birds had become his friends. Even the mighty roar of a lion resounding through the vlei about the pans had meant nothing to him. As the terrific sound rolled forth, his mother had swung sharply round and stood with her head belligerently straight, ears stiff and nostrils distended in an effort to catch a betraying scent. Bong'kwé too had swung around. He imitated the big cow beside him. It was a new sound and interesting, but why his mother should be so restive and nervous he did not understand. That it was a lion roaring, he did not know. But when some minutes later a sickly, rotten, pungent odor drifted to his nostrils he stiffened and snorted in his baby fashion. It was not fear—only a reaction to an unpleasant smell. But his mother had turned again. She snorted harsh and gruff, and that snort conveyed a threat of power and watchfulness that the lion respected, for the scent passed and the roaring was heard no more.

“It was long before the cow left the 'saka that night. When she did she did not go to the pans by the route she commonly followed. To Bong'kwé the reason was not plain. He thought, if he thought at

all, that his mother was taking him to some new spot. But as the two swished through the long grass a familiar smell came drifting down the breeze. It was the smell of the pans; water, marshy ground, rotten grass, and the sour smell left by game. Intermingled with these was the strong, fresh scent of buffalo. His mother had stopped and was drawing her breath slowly as if tasting all the smells that came on the air. Soon she moved ahead and shortly the two emerged upon the short grass of the grazing ground.

“Other big animals were there. Some were grazing slowly over the little flat. One or two waded in the water of the pan and chewed noisily on the sweet, tangled grass. Bong'kwé stared. But these other animals after glancing up had unconcernedly resumed their feeding. His mother waded into the pan and having drunk began to graze. Bong'kwé moved as near her as he dared, and watched the other animals. They were like his mother in shape and smell. Slowly the realization came to him that these creatures were like himself: that they were buffalo, his relations.

“Bong'kwé's mother fed slowly along the shallow edge of the pan. He followed opposite to her,



THE LITTLE BUFFALO PLODDING ALONG BEHIND. . . .





not caring yet to be alone amongst these other beasts. As he moved he met another calf, standing as he was, watching a big buffalo in the water. The two touched noses and, smelling each other carefully, found each that the other was a buffalo. And so the two stayed together for company and without realizing it absorbed each other into the homogeneity of the herd.

“When an old, hairless cow, with horns worn dull and short, left the feeding in the pan and started back for the 'saka, Bong'kwé followed his mother as she joined the others. Together the small herd made their way up the long grass to the 'saka, where they spread out, and as the sun came up, stood contentedly chewing their cuds, and basking in the warm rays, nursed their calves.

“As the heat increased, the herd moved under the dense cover of the thick bush and lay down, a bull here, over there a cow and calf, until a small area was covered with buffalo. Not all lay down. A bull scraped his horns against a tree. Another stood still under a clump of bush, his ears moving lazily and his head drooping as he chewed his cud.

“Thus Bong'kwé joined the herd, a herd which, as the grass dried and the water and grazing be-



came scarce, grew larger and larger until it became the Great Herd which you and I, I'nkos, know so well. The great herd which passes this village nearly every night on its way to the grazing on the flats and from which I have killed so many buffalo that it is known as Shamanyati's herd."

The old hunter fell silent. From the twitching of his face I could follow his thoughts. Thoughts of the hunt they were, of the Great Herd and of sudden dust-raising charges. For a long time he squatted in front of me and then, shivering a little, rose to his feet.

"The night grows cold, I'nkos," he said, looking down at me as I sat huddled in my deck chair. "To-morrow night I will continue the tale. But now," he touched his scar, "this aches. The warmth of the fire will seem good. Sleep well, my chief." Leaving me, Shamanyati entered a hut and I went off to my bed of cross-laid grass.

It was a cold night. As I lay between my blankets, the song of the dance rising and falling above the village, I thought of the Great Herd even then in all probability grazing on the flats under the hard, white light of a cold moon. Was the old leader of whom Shamanyati had spoken still

the guide of all those lives? Did she perchance remember anything of that big, dark calf that had joined her near the two pans? Or was that too long ago? Dreaming thus, I fell asleep and woke to find the sun peeping over the far-flung horizon of the flats and the acrid smoke of dung fires in my nose.

## CHAPTER V

A FAINT clatter of plates and the subdued murmur of voices arose from behind a rough grass shelter which showed sharp against the light of a small fire. I watched dreamily as the cook emerged, and brushing the ashes from the top of the Dutch oven, piled fresh coals on the hot iron lid. A tantalizing odor of hot bread drifted to me. The black gleaming silhouette bending over the pot straightened and disappeared into the shelter.

I sat still, my book unheeded on my lap. The great logs of my fire crackled and shed squarish chunks of glowing coal. Little showers of sparks danced upwards, to die away among the leaves which trembled overhead. The trees around threw out great twisted branches with crooked finger-like twigs as if imploring God to grant them sur-

cease from the drought which had lain over them now for some six months. But the end of winter was at hand. Within another month the clouds would pile up and rain would descend in torrents. Yet before then as if in joyful anticipation the trees would burst into leaf and the veld would be green and beautiful despite the fact that not a drop of moisture would have fallen.

A hush settled over camp. At one side a group of natives were gathered close around a pot. It was the time of the evening meal. As they reached first one and then another toward the pile of stiff-cooked meal their skins gleamed softly, almost, but not quite, blending with the shadows amongst which they crouched. As I watched, a shadowy figure emerged from the darkness beyond the fire, and passing the feasting group, uttered a low greeting. As the man came within the light of my fire I saw that it was Shamanyati come to tell me more of Bong'kwé.

The old hunter approached, and sinking to his haunches in front of me, clapped his hands softly in greeting. I looked at him and smiled.

“You had good hunting, I'nkos?” he queried, for I had been out all day.

"Not bad," I answered, "but the game is not what it used to be, Shamanyati. There are too many guns hereabouts."

"Indeed that is true," rejoined my tracker. "Many young men to-day have guns. It is not like the times when I hunted with only the bow and spear. Then much cunning and knowledge were required to bring home meat."

I interrupted his thoughts, for the old man was much given to reminiscence.

"You were going to tell me about Bong'kwé," I said.

"Bong'kwé. Oh, yes," he said, and then picking up the tale, resumed the story of the calf.

"As I was coming from the village I thought of all the dangerous animals that stalk the veld under the dark blackness of the night. Indeed, I'nkos, it is wonderful that any young creature survives to grow. There are so many, many dangers; snakes, hyenas, leopards, cheetahs, lions, the wild dogs, crocodiles in the water, and even the lowly jackal. All are killers.

"As the herd of buffalo which Bong'kwé and his mother had joined grew larger and larger the leader led them from one pan to another. Not for long



did they remain in any one place. The leader was old and she knew that enemies of many kinds follow such a great herd as the one she led. Lions hang on the fringes, hoping for a chance to rush and overwhelm a calf which by misadventure has lagged behind or strayed beyond the protecting adults. Leopards, stupid and bold, sometimes risk a plunge from an overhanging branch. Then there is always man. What a terror we must be for animals to face! We have no habits by which animals can gauge our movements. Neither do we have to approach and fight cheek by jowl to do our killing. Appearing silently, if we appear at all, we loose death from a distance and then fade away. No place, no animal is safe from us. Indeed we are a curse.

“It was to be long before Bong'kwé learned of man. Now as the herd wandered over the veld, feeding by night around the pans and sleeping during the day in the shade and protection of the lusakas, he met many of the other inhabitants of the country.

“Kudu he had learned to know in the 'saka in which he had been born. The little duiker, too, had lived there, and Bong'kwé had seen them more than once. Duiker often stand and watch animals

approach. They are so small and they stand so still that it is very difficult to detect them. And they disappear so quickly. Many times when I have been creeping quietly along a 'saka I have seen these little antelopes. Nearly always alone their shapes seem suddenly to stand out against the background of bush and grass as if, by witch doctoring, they had only then appeared. It is curious how a man will peer and look and see nothing alive and then abruptly a whole animal shows itself before his eyes. The eye is indeed quick, for it must catch some tiny movement that the head is not quick enough to acknowledge. I wonder if Bong'kwé had such experiences. I believe not, for the eye of an animal is very keen and their ears and noses are of so much more help than ours.

“The sable also stands and watches but he is fearless and bold like his cousin the roan. With all the antelope Bong'kwé gradually made acquaintance. In the open tree country roamed eland and roan. The herds of game moved backwards and forwards across the veld, all governed by the same need for grass and water but yet not mixing with the buffalo. No animal so wades in water as the buffalo. So the herd would linger long throughout

the nights around and in the pans. The sable likes bushy country and feeds much on certain leaves. Eland wander in the long grass, even occasionally sleeping away the heat of the day in that dense but shadeless stuff. Zebra and wildebeest, those curious brothers, prefer the short fine threadlike grass found under the mopani trees. Thus although constantly crossing and recrossing each other's trails each kind of animal stays by itself and seldom mixes with the other. Bong'kwé's herd passed through all types of veld in their search for food and safety, and thus the calf came to know the zebras and the hartebeest, the sable and the wildebeest and the eland. As the great herd moved, feeding here and there, other game moved aside and watched. There was no animosity but neither was there any friendliness.

“About and around these peaceful grass eaters stalked constantly the killers, the renders of flesh, those who take immediate advantage of any mistakes or lapses of discipline. Gradually as the grass dried and grew yellow, Bong'kwé learned the life of the veld and of the herd. By constant repetition and example he learned to follow docilely wherever the old leader led. He watched the older animals

and saw that when one lifted its head and, scenting the wind suspiciously, snorted in alarm or anger, the others paid attention and did likewise. So did Bong'kwé, and thus learned the smells of life and as day followed day learned to connect a certain smell with zebra or another with a wandering wart-hog or the loping hyenas.

“As the moons changed and life became more difficult because of the drying up of the country, the herd welded itself into a homogeneous unity. What one knew all knew. Each became a scout, a guard, and yet each buffalo was no more than a single member of the great herd obeying the leadership of the hairless cow with the worn-away horns.”

: A silence dropped over us. Shamanyati reached for his snuff gourd and I unconsciously began stuffing my pipe. The faint clatter from the kitchen shelter had died away. The cook, finished for the day, had gone to join my other followers about their fire. Far away on the flats a jackal yapped shrilly. A night bird cried out. But except for these the veld lay still and menacingly quiet.

“It was on much such a night as this that I once heard a cheetah hunting.” Shamanyati had picked

up his story again. "With one companion I was hunting in country far toward the rising sun from here. It was night. We lay side by side close to the little fire. The bush was silent. Not even a bird called. Then from a rise not far from where we lay came a haunting, weary, yelping cry: *yuim, yuim, yuim*. It grew sharper and louder as the cheetah dashed along pursuing some antelope. The sound passed along the ridge as if it came from some sort of ghost dancing and running frantically. Then it died away in the distance.

"As he spent all his nights under the stars, Bong'kwé must have heard this sound moving across the veld in the flat light of the moon. But cheetahs are not enemies of the buffalo. If they should find a calf undoubtedly they would kill it, but they are not fighters and claws like the leopard and the lion. Their great asset is not strength or hooked paws. Rather it is their speed, for there is no animal that can run so fast as they, although the wild dog can run for longer.

"Once in their travels across the veld the herd struck the remains of the kill of lions. The leader snorted and pawed the ground. Then she swung away and led the buffalo around. But a whiff



reached Bong'kwé. That awful stench coming from meat and bones bubbling with maggots sickened him. His hair rose and his tail twitched and started to curl threateningly over his back. His breath stuck, stench-laden, in his throat. To his calf mind it was not clear what it was that he smelt, but he felt that it was unpleasant and unclean.

“It was while approaching the pans that Bong'kwé first began to realize the value to the herd and to him of other game. It mattered not how roundabout a route was necessary, never would the leader approach a pan unless the wind had first brought to her the signal that there were no killers lurking in wait. If it was the scent of zebra, warthog, or perhaps of hartebeest that came drifting on the breeze she would lead the way without hesitation. She well knew that these timid animals would not be lingering by the water if there were any trace of lions near by.

“This is in a way curious and interesting, I'nkos. For never in all my hunting have I found a spot at which lions have killed near water. The game is far too wary to be caught at such a place. Well they know that all animals must drink and that the

lion is also aware of this fact. Hence the careful approach upwind. But the lion is not so foolish as to waste the precious night lying in long grass by a pan hoping to make a kill. Occasionally he may try a stalk upon a pan, creeping upwind himself, or he may stampede a herd of frightened antelope onto his mates waiting down the wind. Once or twice I have found traces of his having hunted thus, but never of his having lain in wait.

“Birds as well as game tell much to an animal as wise as the leader of the Great Herd. Not always do the buffalo drink at night. When a pan must be approached while the sun is high animals take a long, long time before they come out in the open. Hidden at the edge of the bush nearest the pan, they will stand motionless and gaze intently at the water and the grass and country surrounding it. If there be geese and ducks or cranes or even rails there, their attitudes convey much information to a careful watcher. Perchance the birds keep well away from one end, occasionally eying the bank anxiously. Or they may be scattered over the surface feeding happily among the blue and gold water lilies or scampering light-footed across the lily pads. No matter what such a scene conveys, no

matter how peaceful the inhabitants of the pan may seem, no animal will even then approach the water until it has sampled the wind drifting from the surface. For there is no creature that does not have a scent, and even though it be a faint one it will leave some taint upon the breeze.

“These habits of caution Bong'kwé slowly learned by seeing them constantly carried out. He naturally followed his mother closely about like our own children; there were many things which attracted his attention and to investigate which he might have lingered behind the herd had not his mother bellowed softly to him.

“One night the herd of buffalo stood motionless at the edge of the bush. They were studying a vlei at the upper end of which lay a pan at which they proposed to slake their thirst. Here Bong'kwé witnessed a hunt which impressed his calf brain with an intensity of terror. The veld lay hard and sharp under the brilliant light of half a moon. The crooked trees showed bare and gaunt, tossed against the sky as if in torment. The clumps of bushes dotting the vlei were stark and black against the silvery sheen of the grass. The palms, no higher than a buffalo's back, looked like many

fingered hands thrust from the ground in gigantic appeal. It was a familiar scene to the watching buffalo, but even they seemed to be oppressed by the silent ferocity of the veld that night. As they stood still, looming monstrous in the half-light under the trees, the abrupt yip-yapping of wild dogs broke forth on the night. The herd moved closer together. The calves crowded against their mothers. The shrill high notes of a pack of dogs in full cry sounded at the head of the vlei. The sound of hoofs rapidly pounding the hard earth came to the ears of the alert buffalo. On the opposite side of the vlei a hartebeest came into view. It was running, but not with the bounding gallop with which it derisively vanishes from the hunter's sight. Its labored breathing came only too distinctly to the buffalo watching intently. As the exhausted animal disappeared under the shadow of the trees the pack came into sight. With slavering mouths and tongues hanging far out they ran tireless and menacing. The scent was hot and lay close and heavy. It was only too obvious that before the moon had risen another hand's breadth the dogs would have pulled the hartebeest apart piece by piece and snap by slavering snap until

it stumbled, bitten and exhausted, to die under the raging, growling horde of parti-colored dogs.

“When eventually the leader led her herd out onto the vlei the breeze was sweet and untainted. But the scent of the pack lay heavy where they passed. As the buffalo crossed it many snorted in anger and defiance and Bong'kwé recoiled from the rankness of that smell. His head straight out and stepping high, he followed his mother toward the water. But that horrible sweetish smell lingered long, and when encountered later always brought back to his mind that wild chase through the moonlight of which he had been a silent and wondering witness.

“The grass was becoming dry and dead. It was seldom now that the herd entered a 'saka until the sun was well up above the trees. It required more than a night to find grazing sufficient to fill the enormous stomachs of such a herd. For the herd was continually growing larger and larger as small parties of six or eight buffalo joined it.

“The other inhabitants of the veld were gathering in herds as well. No longer did Bong'kwé meet small groups of zebra or impalla. Feeding in the vlei, he occasionally saw an old blue eland bull or



a black and white sable. Both of these antelope fascinated Bong'kwé! The single bull eland were so huge and looked very massive and unafraid. To Bong'kwé, looking upward, they seemed even bigger than his mother or the big buffalo bulls that associated occasionally with the herd. Indeed it is a very big buffalo that is as big as one of those huge eland bulls. And here is another curious fact, I'nkos. An eland cannot fight. His horns are not of much use to him even when long and sharp. Those of old bulls are so worn away that they are only blunt, rounded stumps. Yet lions have great difficulty in killing these harmless, defenseless old eland. Many a one I have killed with a poisoned arrow only to find on the back of its neck many holes and long scars where a lion had leaped on it and tried to kill it. Their necks are too thick for a lion to be able to bite through the meat and fat and reach the spine to break it. That thick neck is so strong a lion cannot break it by pulling with one hooked paw on the nose as he does with smaller game such as the zebra or even one of our own cattle. Neither can a lion knock an eland down. Yet see the buffalo. His back and neck are just as massive and strong as those of an eland.

His hide is as thick as my hand. Yet he is armed with tremendous horns. Horns with which he can fight and of such a shape that they protect his head and face from a lion that may have sprung upon his back. Truly, I'nkos, the animals of the veld are worthy of much notice and thought. Here one sees the buffalo armed with his thick protecting boss and sweeping horns, so deadly in combat, and over there stands the eland without anything to defend himself excepting his hoofs and massive strength. Both are attacked by lions and yet many of both survive to grow old and lose their hair.

“Bong'kwé did not know that the eland could not fight. He only saw a very big animal that walked heavily and majestically about the veld, his long dewlap swinging slowly from side to side and his head, with its face covered with matted black hair, held proud and high. The sable appeared far more a fighter than the eland, as indeed he is. Of all the many antelopes that roam the veld the sable is by far the handsomest and shares with his brother, the roan, the reputation of being the greatest fighter. Those long, curved horns are deadly and he is so quick with them. Once, I'nkos, I chased a sable with dogs. I had wounded it with an arrow

and it was very sick. Before we had gone a great distance I found it lying down with its feet doubled under it. A sable almost always lies down so to do its fighting. Doubled up in this fashion it can protect its whole body with sweeps of its horns. Thinking this sable badly hurt and nearly dead, I approached and threw my spear. But even as the spear struck and entered, the sable struck also. His head flew back and the point of one horn smashed into the shaft of my spear and with a jerk tore it out of the flesh. It was done so exceedingly quick that it seemed almost as if my spear had not entered at all but rather had rebounded as from a rock.

“These antelopes and many others Bong'kwé saw coming and going in the continual quest for water or grass. Excepting certain ones such as the sable, the eland, and the roan they were all in herds. Only the bush-buck of the 'sakas and the little antelope like the duiker, the grysbok, and the oribi stayed habitually alone or in pairs. The pigs, too, seemed a lonely lot although family parties were not uncommon. Exactly why it is that wild creatures thus form large herds at this season I do not know. Grass is not plentiful nor is water easy

to find. I think that game would stay in herds all the seasons were it not for the breeding. The cows separate when their calves are due and go off by themselves. This breaks up the herds. Single creatures, even the fierce sable and huge eland, are in far greater danger of attack than the members of a herd. There are so many eyes, ears, and noses in a herd. If when hunting I find a single animal I am much more confident of success in the ensuing stalk than I am if it chances to be a herd that I have to approach. When a single beast moves behind a tree or grazes so that an ant-hill comes between me and it I can move forward swiftly. But if it be a herd I must watch constantly to see that there is not some animal lagging behind or grazing to one side. Lions must find a stalk just as difficult as I do. True, they can move much more quietly and can lie closer to the ground. But I do not have to approach so close and so our chances are about equal.

“And what must the antelope, the zebra, and the buffalo feel who are constantly surrounded with threatening death? Indeed theirs is far from a happy life. Wild dogs, lions, snakes, leopards, crocodiles, and, above all, man. No wonder that

they are a nervous lot constantly moving and constantly on the alert to spy a movement in the bushes or to snatch a taint of danger from the drifting breeze. Yet I would not say that Bong'kwé, for example, was unhappy. Although he was far from knowing all or even most of the dangers of the veld, it was the only life he knew. No animals are like man in that they imagine things or long for the impossible. Rather do they accept quietly the happenings and situations in which they find themselves, a fact which has often caused me to wonder if animals are not far wiser and happier than we humans who think ourselves so grand.”{

Shamanyati ceased speaking and sat staring at the fire. I also was silent. As the old man had said, there were many things on the veld to think about and ponder and many questions to which one could not readily find a convincing answer. This wrinkled, pock-marked, and scarred tracker of mine was much inclined to liken his beloved animals to men. He had lived with them almost more than with the members of his own village. The black lives very close to nature, and many of Shamanyati's examples were not far from truth. I had often felt that if I could explain some of the curious oc-



currences of the veld I would understand more of human nature. Therefore, I did not interrupt when Shamanyati struck off at a tangent from his tale and moralized a bit. For some minutes we sat silently gazing at the fire. A log fell, burnt through, and tossed a shower of sparks against the blackness of the night. Shamanyati scrambled to his feet, and moving about, rebuilt the fire so that it burnt bright and high. I moved my chair back a bit, for the heat was great. As I settled down again Shamanyati picked up his story and went on.

“Bong'kwé had never seen an animal bigger than his mother, unless it were one of the blue eland bulls. Once or twice in their wanderings the herd had crossed the spoor of elephants, but the scent had been faint and had meant little to Bong'kwé. The holes stamped deep into the soft ground, which were the tracks left by the elephants, had conveyed to his young brain no sense of the size or weight of the owners of those great feet. If by chance Bong'kwé had come upon a tree pushed over or snapped off by some feeding elephant he would not have realized that it was an animal that had done that damage. There were many such broken trees about the veld. Some were

the work of elephants and some the result of high winds or fire or just old age and collapse. So he was not prepared to find that there were animals out of whose way the old cow would lead the herd. True, that night he did not really see the elephants. Rather he smelt them and seemed to sense rather than see their hugeness and their power.

“As I have said before, water was becoming scarcer and scarcer. The larger pans still held plenty of water but they were far apart. The herd had to travel greater distances to secure a drink than they had when Bong'kwé and his mother had joined the herd. It was early in the night. The herd had been on the move since the cool of the afternoon. As the leader forged ahead, leading her buffalo through a stretch of treey country where the grass was short and patchy, she suddenly stopped. A rending, penetrating sound had abruptly shattered the peace and stillness of the night. It was the scream of an elephant, shrilly trumpeting its annoyance at some unpleasant happening. For some time the leader stood still, but as no further sounds came to her she moved ahead again at an angle from her former path. Elephants she had seen many times before and

knew that they did not like associates. It is not the lion, I'nkos, who is king of the veld. Indeed, killer though he is, the other animals do not acknowledge him as ruler of all no matter how loudly he may roar. He gives way before the elephant, as does his much larger and more pugnacious associate, s'chempera. It is Big Feet, he that has the serpent between his eyes, the smasher of trees, that is king. And rightly, because he is wise and, though powerful beyond the strength of any other animal, gentle and harmless to the other inhabitants of the veld.

"Bong'kwé heard the scream as distinctly as the leader. Menacing and shrill, it shot in one ear and rang through his brain. He had not the faintest notion what animal it was that had given utterance to such a noise, but there was a timbre to the sound that impressed him, young as he was. He pushed closer to his mother and stood motionless with her, listening for and yet dreading to hear that scream again. But when the leader moved he followed with his mother.

"The trees became scattered. The starlight lit up the ground more sharply. Bong'kwé could see that the edge of the bush was close and that the old cow

was about to lead them out onto the vlei. He had almost if not entirely forgotten the scream and therefore grew impatient at what seemed the unduly long wait and watch at the tree's edge. When the leader finally stepped out onto the short grass a smell came drifting to Bong'kwé which instantly made him stiffen and caused many of the older buffalo to snort suspiciously.

"There was a pan at the end of the vlei. From it strange sounds and familiar and unfamiliar scents came drifting. There was a sound of great splashings as if an enormous animal were wallowing in shallow water, the smell of sweet grass, torn lilies and mud, and a strange sourish smell which Bong'kwé remembered having faintly smelt before. There were sucking sounds and then a blowing and hissing like water rushing very, very fast in a river. Bong'kwé did not know it, but that sound was made by an elephant blowing water over its head and shoulders as it took a bath. If he could have approached closer he would have seen the great beasts gathered in and about the pan. Trampling great holes in the soft ground, they waded in the water, dug up trunkfuls of mud to plaster their backs or squirted water over themselves. One great

cow had lain down in the muddy water and covered herself with a mess of lilies, mud, and grass. Two or three calves were imitating their elders and kicking up the water in showers with their front feet.

“Downwind from this destructive party the buffalo grazed nervously. Bong'kwé was so interested in the smells and sounds that he had neglected to nurse—an act he usually performed at every opportunity. Even the oldest animals, tolerably familiar with elephants and their habits, continually interrupted their grazing to turn and stare toward the pan. The smell of water was enticing, but not a buffalo cared to venture near those great animals making such a noise in the semi-darkness.

“An elephant trumpeted again. The sound echoed under the trees and rolled down the vlei. Every buffalo raised its head and stood motionless, staring upwind. Again that shrill sound cut through the night. Ere the echoes had died away completely the leader had started to move. Soundless, the herd followed, even the calves refraining from remonstrative bellows. Like low, shifting ant-hills the herd drifted across the faintly lit vlei and vanished amongst the shadows under the trees. The old



leader was heading for a distant pan, one she trusted and hoped would be found free of both lions and elephants. True to their discipline, although some of the buffalo did not fully comprehend the reason for the sudden move, the herd followed her as one."

## CHAPTER VI

“**A** CHANGE was coming over the veld. The trees had lost their leaves. The long grass had dried and become harsh and in many places wind-blown and broken. The nights were cold and the moon had assumed an additional hardness and brilliance. At night the stars seemed very close, so brightly did they shine, and save just before the dawn the veld was lit by a silvery, shadowy light that threw up grotesque silhouettes and created black caves in the denseness of the 'sakas.

“The game was becoming more restless than usual. Backward and forward the herds wandered across the veld. Water became scarcer and scarcer and grass was more difficult to find. A chilling, penetrating mist smoked up from the surfaces of the pans, and hanging on the coats of the grazing

animals, condensed and shone in tiny drops of cold water. Ice occasionally formed in thin sheets over the muddy water lying in the holes that were footprints in the mud around the pans.

“The Great Herd of buffalo traveled far those days. The calves were beginning to graze a little, which was well, for their mothers needed much time for their own grazing. There was some new grass but it was either very short or hidden deep amongst the hillocks of the hard stalks of the dried long grass. It was wonderful that the veld showed green at all, for no sooner did a blade of grass show itself than it was cropped quick and close by a passing zebra, antelope, buffalo, or a wandering pig.

“Bong'kwé was growing fast these days despite the thinness of his mother's milk. He had learned to crop and like grass. Now when his mother waded into a pan he also waded in the short water at the edge or hunted along the banks for patches of green grass. His horns stuck up from his head a hand's breadth. His coat was shaggy and patchy where the silky, baby hair was falling out to be replaced with the stout, short hair of the maturer buffalo. His legs were heavy and those shoulders which later on were to be so massive and strong were even

now showing signs of the great strength of a bull buffalo. And he had learnt and unlearnt much.

“He knew now that birds were not twittering inconsequential things but rather firm friends to whose warnings it was well to give heed. The greenish-gray tick bird that hopped and climbed over his and his companions’ backs rid him of many an irritating tick or insect. At this season the dry grass was covered with tiny ticks that dropped on his back and sides as he stolidly followed his mother to and fro. These minute insects, landing on his hair, crawled down next to his skin and fastened their heads deep therein. Rubbing against trees was of some help in allaying the irritating itch which followed. Bong’kwé had also learned that rolling in the mud of the wallows in half-dry water holes helped a lot. The mud dried next his skin and was cooling and, when he scraped against a tree, came off in cakes, sometimes dragging a tick along with it. Of course, I’nkos, Bong’kwé did not think that if he wallowed in the mud the mud would later dry in the sun and wind and that when he rubbed it off he would also rub off ticks. No indeed. Animals, although they do many things which seem to us to mean that they reason

with their minds as we humans sometimes do, cannot thus connect occurrences and happenings to form a connected line of thought. Bong'kwé wallowed because the cool, wet mud felt good to his dry skin. The flies and ticks which bit him so often set up little sores which the mud covered and healed. He rubbed against trees and bushes because he itched and not to rub off the mud and the embedded ticks.

“Did I say that animals cannot connect cause and effect? That was not wholly true, I'nkos, for they do reason. Bong'kwé learnt that he could graze unconcernedly so long as his friend the tick bird clung to his back. He came to realize that the bird was a better lookout than he and that he could depend upon his friend for warning of anything moving near him. At the sudden chirp and flying up of the bird he would raise his head and stand looking carefully about him. If the bird returned he resumed his grazing, content that the warning had been a false alarm. But if his friend stayed away Bong'kwé moved about, restless and insecure.

“As he came to know that the tick bird was both scout and friend, so Bong'kwé came to realize that



the other birds and animals around him served as scouts for danger. The little bright-colored, high-leaping oribi might mean almost anything if they came bounding down the vlel. Perhaps they had seen wild dogs, been startled from their nap by a jackal, or possibly a man had scared them. The abrupt deep bark of the bush-buck or the call of the kudu in the 'sakas gave warning of the slinking, stealthy leopard. The gray lourie swinging high up on the top fronds of a palm tree had a wide view all around. His cry, 'Go-away-go-away,' usually presaged the movements of some animal.

"All these sounds Bong'kwé came to know and value. How, you ask? I do not know, I'nkos, unless it was by watching his mother and the old leader or by constantly hearing and then seeing. But regardless of how they came to understand these signs and signals, I have yet to hunt an animal that did not know them. If you think this wonderful, I'nkos, think of the honey badger and the honey guide. Those two, the little short-legged badger and the twittering black and gray bird, have arranged a partnership that is the equal of anything I have seen amongst the people of my village. When the bird finds a bees' nest it goes off twittering its



THESE ANTELOPES AND OTHERS BONG'KWÉ SAW COMING AND GOING IN THE CONTINUAL QUEST FOR WATER OR GRASS.



peculiar note to find a badger to open the nest. When it does find its helper it leads it back to the bees' nest and then flutters around while the badger tears the tree or ant-hill open with its powerful claws. As the white grubs drop from the busily champing jaws of the badger the bird picks them up, and thus both profit with a sweet meal. Once I saw the two together. I had heard the little bird twittering and was looking for it—for it will lead a man as well as a badger to a bees' nest. But as I looked I heard a rustling noise among the leaves under the bushes in the direction from which the twittering came. Not knowing what it was that might be coming I quietly climbed an ant-hill and stood still, watching. Soon the honey guide appeared, flying from branch to branch and twittering and chirping constantly. It would fly ahead and then anxiously come back and alight on a branch to call as if begging someone to hurry. And it was begging someone to hurry, for behind came a honey badger stumping along on its short bow legs as it climbed over logs or ambled around stumps or trees. It grunted once or twice as if to tell the anxious bird that it was hurrying and making the best pace it could. I stood on the ant-hill until the pair

had gone from sight and the twittering sounded faint and far away. Never before had I seen such a thing, although I had heard tell of it and had often followed the bird myself.

“So when hunting one must watch carefully and take notice not only of the animal which you are stalking but also keep an eye on any birds or little antelope that may be about. But I do not need to tell you these things, I’nkos, for you, too, are a hunter and must know them.”

Shamanyati stopped and, reaching for his snuff gourd, knocked out a generous helping of the fine brown powder on the palm of his hand. I watched him, thinking that it was curious that a man who had been such a hunter and killer should also show such a deep understanding of and sympathy with animals. Yet it was not curious. For he was a hunter successful beyond the powers of most men, and I realized suddenly that he was so successful because he did possess this sympathy and had grown to understand animals better probably than he understood his fellow men.

A gust of wind sighed through the trees above the camp. It blew the ashes of the fire into a whirling cone that twisted away in the darkness beyond the



firelight. The coals glowed brightly and small blue flames spurted out between cracks in the logs. Around the other fire I could see prone bodies stretched side by side on the ground as my tired carriers and hunters slept away their weariness. At each man's head a spear stood upright, stuck firmly in the ground, ready to hand in case of need. The wind died away and the glow from the coals faded. The sleeping men melted into the shadows on the ground and only the knobby outline of some toes showed against the dim glow of the coals. Natives always sleep with their feet toward a fire and preferably on their backs. Shamanyati resumed his tale:

“Those days that Bong'kwé was learning the meanings of the sounds of birds an orange haze hung over the veld. The sun rose blood red, glowing sullenly as if from a blow. In the villages we had gathered our crops and were clearing the fields. Piles of dry stalks lay about and lines of brush, dead and dried, were piled along the edges of the lands. Many men had already begun the claiming of new land for the next year's grain. Chopping down trees, they burnt them and burnt too the stalks and dry bush. Often these fires broke away or were scattered by the winds that blow hard

during this season. These sparks started grass and forest fires. They went unheeded because these huge fires that burn all over the country at this time are good. The long yellow grass disappears and in its place comes up short green grass notwithstanding the fact that no rain has fallen and that the ground is so hard a pick will not enter at the first blow. Thus our cattle find new grass, hunting is easier because one can see far but yet hard because if one can see far one can also be seen from afar. There are fewer ticks and walking is easier and safer. Yes, I'nkos, these fires are good even though the Magistrate at Boma has told us not to light them."

Shamanyati paused in his telling to spit vigorously. Whether it was in disgust at the ruling of the Magistrate or because his snuff was strong I could not decide. Then he went on:

"The sun had only just disappeared in a flame of red and orange. A yellowish tint lay on the veld. A chill struck through the air, and the buffalo herd, as it slowly filtered out of the 'saka lying along the banks of a dry stream, seemed restless and oppressed. The old ones sniffed the air as if suspicious of danger. The leader stealthily led the way toward

the vlei, but even she appeared less confident than usual. Bong'kwé felt uncomfortable but he could detect no real reason for his discomfiture. Possibly it was the grass they had cropped at the last pan. It had not been sweet but rather rank and tough. Then his mother had not been so attentive to him of late. Often when he wanted to nurse she shouldered him away or walked off as if unaware of his need. Poor Bong'kwé was being weaned. The grass was far too dry and too scarce for his mother to have a continuous supply of milk. Besides he was growing so big it was high time that he learnt to forage for his own food.

“The herd moved along slowly, the buffalo spread out over the veld searching for patches of grass. As they walked, now disappearing in the gloom, now coming out black from behind a tree, they looked monstrous and forbidding. The moon had not yet risen and the brilliance of the stars was dimmed by the haze of smoke drifting far overhead in the sky. The moving black shapes merged into the darkness and except for the occasional click of horns or the bawl of a calf one would never have known that a huge herd of buffalo was passing by.

“As the buffalo neared the vlei the moon showed and the veld changed its tone from black to gray. A gust of wind swept through the trees and made the dry leaves rattle and dance. Out in the open a zebra neighed shrilly and Bong'kwé, gazing out over the grass, could just distinguish the lighter shadows that indicated where the zebra grazed.

“On the vlei the buffalo spread out and fed up and down its length, but always as a herd drifting slowly against the wind. Ahead of them were the zebra. Amongst them Bong'kwé could see small animals. They must have been foals, youngsters like himself, for they bore, although indistinctly, the black and white bandings of the zebra.

“When next Bong'kwé looked up the zebras were gone. He gazed about—not that he was perturbed to find that the zebra had vanished, but from lack of interest in his grazing. Grass, and rather dry grass at that, had not yet grown to be all-important to him. As his look wandered over the veld he spotted the zebra standing motionless at the edge of the vlei. Idly he gazed at them, and then, flapping his ears, returned to his grazing.

“The air grew perceptibly colder. A slight breeze blew and then died away. The leader raised

her head and sniffed. Far away beyond the head of the vlei a dull moaning sound arose. The buffalo raised their heads and listened. The zebra, too, had heard, and knowing what to expect moved away from the trees out onto the open ground at the edge of the vlei. The sky darkened and one by one the stars faded out. The wind increased in force and became colder. A few scattered drops of water hurtled through the air and smote hard upon the hides of the now motionless buffalo. The roaring, moaning sound grew louder and nearer. The buffalo turned and with their backs to the wind waited for the coming storm. A tree creaked loudly and protestingly, the wind blew harder, and somewhere near a large branch fell with a crash. Then the storm, howling in a single, deep-pitched, racketing moan, broke over the waiting herd. Dust, whipped from the ground, zipped along mixed with bits of grass and swirling leaves. Scattered heavy drops of rain splashed on the buffalo, and gathering, ran down their sides. Bong'kwé crowded close to his mother and the other buffalo. Thunder crashed out and a vivid spurt of lightning lit the vlei in a single dazzling flash. Then the storm had passed more quickly than it had come.



"Shaking herself, the leader returned to her grazing. Bong'kwé followed her example and found the grass fresher and sweeter than before. The few drops of water had given the struggling vegetation new life and a new tenderness. He felt better all over. It was as if a pall had been lifted from over the veld. It was warmer and the stars were shining again. The zebra had started feeding, and in the moonlight which now streamed across the vlei Bong'kwé could see them more distinctly.

"Not for long did the herd remain in the vlei. The grass was short, and over large areas it had been rooted up bodily by wart-hogs and bush-pigs. Stopping only here and there to crop at some grass overlooked by previous grazers, the old cow headed up the vlei and soon the herd disappeared under the shadows of the trees. The leader was heading for a pan some distance away where, when the herd had visited it before, there had been plenty of water and an abundance of sweet marsh grass.

"It was not always possible for the leader to find a 'saka in which to rest during the heat of the day. Quite frequently the herd lay down in the middle of a patch of mopani trees. In many ways the mopani

was more comfortable during the heat than the 'sakas. The drowsy buffalo received the benefits of any slight breeze that blew. There were fewer flies, and although in the open and so exposed to view, attack was more difficult. But there was not much shade. The straight, rather smallish trees afforded little protection from the sun.

“It was the middle of winter. Grazing grass was almost non-existent. In many spots the open slopes of the gently rolling veld looked brilliantly green. But it was small low-growing bushes that gave color to the landscape, and not edible grass. For the most part the trees were bare and desolate. Some, whose deep roots reached to moisture far below the surface of dry creek-beds, showed up green and dark. Most of the water holes that still contained sufficient water to afford drinks to all the buffalo of such a large herd as Bong'kwé's were muddy. The water stank rank from the innumerable animals that had drunk, bathed, and wallowed. But two or three large pans still contained sweet, clear water. Their surfaces were hidden under masses of water lilies, delicate blue and gold flowers that looked strangely out of place in that desolate country. Knob-billed ducks, spur-

winged geese, an occasional pelican and jaunty, nut-brown rails with blue legs swam and fed wherever the lilies had failed to cover the water completely. Throughout the day cranes and ibis stalked around the edges searching for frogs and grubs. There were black ibis and white ibis, cranes of blue, smoky gray color with long, white necks, and white and black storks with red knees and bills striped boldly in black and red. When the sun was high in the sky and heat waves danced dizzily over the veld game appeared at the water holes. Roan, hardly showing against the indefinable color of the bush veld, drifted out from the trees and cautiously advanced onto the open, bare ground surrounding the water. Slowly, testing the wind constantly, the antelope approached the water. Once they had drunk they lingered. Some lay down. One or two would roll, perhaps. The others of the herd butted lazily or merely strolled to and fro. Zebra came on the scene and drank at the upper end of the pan. They mixed freely with the roan, for they are very friendly fellows. From the side opposite to that from which the roan had come, a handful of red hartebeest minced slowly from the open country. They are very suspicious creatures,

but the sight of so many other animals about the pan gave them confidence, and soon they too had slaked their thirst and were standing about foolish and long-faced occasionally scratching their heads with a hind leg. Hartebeest are always scratching their heads or rubbing against trees, I'nkos. I have often wondered if the maggots in their heads bothered them and made them want to scratch so much.

“The zebra stayed about the pan cropping at what rank grass remained. The hartebeest and the roan melted away. As the last of the herd disappeared amongst the bare trees a herd of waterbuck came down to take their places. They came along more surely than the roan. The feeding zebra banished what fears they had and soon the ground about the water hole was dotted with grayish black animals that would have looked much like donkeys had many of them not had forward-curving horns and all had white circles on their rumps.

“The zebra raised their heads and the waterbuck turned to listen. Something was coming through the bush along the edge of the open country. But almost immediately they lost interest. It was only a herd of silly wildebeest. Galloping furiously, their tails swinging around and around, their

ox-like heads and heavily maned necks bobbing up and down, they raced out onto the flat and rushed up to the water. Their thirst appeased for the time being, they lingered for a while and then raced off again as if they were late and had only a little time in which to reach a certain spot.

“Wildebeest are always playing. Even when they find a spot where the grass grows thick and sweet they must take time from the grazing for tries of strength. Two bulls approaching each other in their feeding will suddenly drop to their knees and butt each other furiously for a moment and then quietly resume feeding again. Or perhaps a cow will start a race and, tearing from a herd, run in a circle, only to stop abruptly and begin grazing. No wonder the wildebeest are such fast runners, I'nkos. They practice enough. And truly I do think they are without sense. Always they are playing and running, and yet from the few skulls which I have found I would say that lions seldom kill them.

“With all this life Bong'kwé had become familiar. When the herd crossed the trails left by the wildebeest or roan his nose told him what animals had passed. He knew the harmless ones, the grass feeders who served as unrelated scouts for the



buffalo. With the scent of lions and wild dogs, of hyenas, jackals, bush-cats, servals, and leopards he was familiar although he had not actually seen all of these. The smell of meat eaters is rank and foul. Bong'kwé felt a repugnance and horror creep over him whenever he encountered those low-lying smells. The elephants also left a scent Bong'kwé did not like. True that they are grass eaters, but to all other creatures there is something indefinable and terrifying about the smell of elephants. Something that seems to speak of enormous power and huge but swift bodies. Perhaps it is the elephant's trunk that is so disconcerting. To other animals that serpent dangling from between the eyes of that enormous animal must look monstrous and unnatural. And indeed it is. For it is not only a nose but a hand as well, and who ever heard of breathing through a hand?

“In spite of all the life that centered around the pans the veld was gradually being abandoned. The orange haze had become thicker. Tiny black specks floated in the air, and a pungent acrid odor lay on the breeze. Even with the coolness of night that bitter smell hung over everything. Bong'kwé could taste it always. It went with every mouthful he ate

and burned in his throat and lungs. Fire appeared. Roaring, it ate up the long yellow grass, throwing up billowing clouds of dense yellow-green smoke where the grass was flat and mouldy. Under the trees where the grass was short the fire flickered and died out, only to be revived and pushed along by a chancy wind. It crept up ant-hills and bounded into dry bushes, leaping high with roars and crackles of glee. Nothing escaped that would burn and soon the veld lay black and bare. Of grass, save fringes around the pans and a few far-scattered clumps that had miraculously escaped the running fire, there was none. Even the 'sakas were scorched.

“To the game the fire itself meant little. It did not frighten them. The older animals knew that those flames even when leaping their highest and crackling loudly could do them no harm unless they were so foolish as to sleep and let the flames lick around their bodies. Bong'kwé soon learned almost to disregard the fires. With the others of the herd he followed behind the line of fire and found that the black feathery shapes that had been stalks of harsh yellow grass tasted good when licked. They were salty and bitter. Frequently as the buffalo roamed in search of grass they passed

close to fires or saw the lines of leaping, dancing flames slowly moving along a rise. Under the trees, which looked ghostly in the flickering light, black silhouettes moved unconcernedly to and fro. The long heads and sharply bent horns told that those colorless shapes were hartebeest licking at the salty residue from the fire. Though the bigger animals were unafraid of the fires the small inhabitants of the veld suffered severely. Mice found their nests burnt. The reed-buck were forced to bound whistling from their beds in the heart of thick clumps of grass. Jackals and the little cats were routed from their lairs. But what was hardship and danger for some was good for others. Over every fire flocks of birds hovered and swooped, catching the clouds of insects driven from the grass by the heat and smoke. White-tailed mongooses and spotted zimba cats found grub hunting much easier than before and the truculent, thick-maned civet cat grew positively fat on the harvest.

"You know, I'nkos," and Shamanyati looked up at me to shake his head, "it is not really a fire such as this by which we are sitting that is a protection to us against lions or leopards. They have seen too many fires to be afraid of them. But they

have learnt that fires throw light and that in that light they can be seen by man, of whom they are afraid. Lions often lie not far from a camp and watch the people moving about in the firelight. If they are man eaters or if they fancy dog meat they will steal into camp after the men have lain down and their cat eyes have ceased to detect any movement about the camp. They will do this no matter how brightly the fire may be burning.

“On the burnt veld the lions, leopards, cheetahs, and hyenas slunk or chased as before. To them the fire had meant little. For the hyenas it uncovered a few dry heaps of bones that they had overlooked before. The chasers, such as wild dogs, found running easier.

“But the grass eaters began to move. Toward the rising sun and downhill somewhat lay a great, open, treeless country. It bordered both sides of a large river and was dotted with lagoons of fresh water and filled with dips covered with succulent green grass.

“The old leader remembered this land and led her herd down to its edge. They had not gone there before because the lowlands take long to dry out

and become firm underfoot, and up until then grass and water, while not plentiful in the bush veld, had been sufficient. Also along that open country men had many villages. It was a dangerous land for game. A land only to be entered when the need was great.

“So the grass eaters, the antelope, the zebra, and the buffalo, moved in their herds towards the great grass lands of the flats. The elephants silently disappeared in another direction, heading for hills and rivers to which their ancestors had worn established trails. The food of elephants is leaves and roots, tall grass and the inner bark of trees. The flats, stretching as far as the eye could see without a tree to break the monotony, was no place for them. But the meat eaters followed the game to the open country, and the bush veld was left to the pigs and the little grub eaters.”

As if to emphasize his last words the old native rose and stretched himself. For a moment he stood gazing out into the night as if trying to see what life might be moving there. Then, drawing his skin cape about him, he looked down at me.

“You hunt again to-morrow?” he asked.



"Yes," I replied. "I need much dried meat for my next trip and must shoot it before the rains begin and make drying impossible."

"Go then down the vlel that lies behind the village, I'nkos," Shamanyati advised. "Just when the sun is rising eland cross there, returning to the bush after feeding in the gardens. You will find them without trouble."

"I will go there," I answered, rising.

"Good-night then, I'nkos."

"Good-night, old man. Sleep well, for you are not young," and standing, I watched the shuffling figure disappear in the darkness towards the village.

## CHAPTER VII

**I**T WAS not until I had finished my evening meal that Shamanyati came to continue his tale of Bong'kwé. The elderly natives are extraordinarily courteous and thoughtful. It would never occur to an old man such as my tracker to disturb me while I was busy at any task or pastime. Only in a matter that he judged I would feel important would he venture to break in upon my thoughts or work. But he knew I was anxious to hear his story and did not linger long amongst my other natives. Just sufficiently long to give me time to realize that he did not wish to press himself upon me.

As I settled myself comfortably in my deck chair, Shamanyati squatted on his heels by the fire in front of me and, after the usual clapping of hands, asked after my day's sport. It was only a form. He

knew that I had been fortunate. I had especially sent meat to him at his hut. The greetings over, we were silent for a few minutes. The old buffalo hunter was picking up the threads of the tale in his mind and I had no wish to interrupt him. Then he began to talk.

“In the country to which the leader was taking her herd, Bong'kwé was to begin his education all over again. Until the time when he found himself in the district which lies along the edge of the flats he had moved in a part of the veld seldom visited by man. Now he was to come upon man's traces everywhere: villages line the edge of the flats—indeed this village is one of them; paths worn deep by generations of bare feet walking between the villages and to and fro for water, wood or grass cross and recross. Men wander the veld in search of fruit or honey. In places they have cut down trees for the bark necessary to rope and net making. There is much hunting, and parties go out to dig pitfalls and to set snares for birds and game.

“With these Bong'kwé had yet to make his acquaintance. Cattle, dogs, the smells of the villages, and other sights and sounds strange to the veld from which man is absent were new to him.

Lions too are much more numerous in this border land. For is there not a constant supply of easily killed meat available in our carelessly guarded herds of cattle? Nor will we speak of a chance dog or goat that may fall a victim.

“The herd had not made the journey from their old grazing ground to the new and more dangerous land in a day, nor in a night. It was not that the distance was so great, for buffalo can travel both fast and far when the need to do so arises. But unmolested, the leader did not hurry. The herd had increased still more until now they left five or six distinct trails behind them in their wanderings. It was indeed the Great Herd, and such huge numbers of animals do not move fast. Slowly they fed along, stopping at pans to drink and wallow. During the heat of the day they lay in 'sakas or perchance under such shade as the mopani trees might offer. Their trail was a meandering one but it led steadily down towards the flats.

“Bong'kwé missed seeing many of the familiar pans. He was conscious that the leader was taking him into a new country, but for what particular reason he could not know. After several nights of travel the country changed sensibly. Dongas be-

came more frequent. There was water in many of the deeper holes in the otherwise dry creek-beds. Along the banks the trees were greener and the 'sakas thicker and more shady. Giant cactus became a frequent sight, growing from the sides or tops of many of the ant-hills. Like all the other parts of the veld over which he had traveled, Bong'kwé found that this new land had been burnt. But in place of the hard-pointed tussocks that he had left behind him, this new country offered short sprouts of green grass. The soil, too, was different. It was soft and sandy, and as the herd of buffalo moved along they kicked up clouds of fine dust that dried their throats and mouths. It was a pleasant land. Gently rolling, like all the veld of the Mashukulumbwe-Barotse country, the rises were often clothed with dense 'sakas of thin-stemmed stuff which ran for great distances. These 'sakas were not wide but were so indefinitely long they seemed to border the whole of the far-flung flats. Behind them lay the kasakas, for the greater part waterless and dense, but offering a secure protection against man.

"About this land of dongas and cactus the herd wandered for the time of the going and coming of two moons. By day they lay in the 'sakas protected



from the heat, which was increasing as summer drew nearer. At times the 'sakas seemed almost to be ready to catch fire, the sun was so fierce. The old leader never stirred until that scorching ball had sunk low amongst the trees and the veld had ceased to dance crazily before the eyes. Bong'kwé often chafed at the long time passed silent and motionless under the leafless shade of the 'sakas. He was growing fast and required much food. But not a buffalo in all that herd would move, and he perforce had to remain. It was a lesson in restraint that later on would stand him in good stead. A motionless animal even in fairly open country will oft escape the hunter's eye. To stand quietly while the sun climbs high and after resting awhile sinks again, requires much patience. The calves want to run, to eat and drink, to gambol and feel their growing muscles stretch and play. For his age Bong'kwé was very large. His horns had hardened a little at their tips. His legs had filled out until they resembled young trees. His neck had thickened and his back was straight and strong and broad. No wonder he wanted movement and, even more, wanted food.

“At night after he and the other calves had drunk

their fill Bong'kwé used to butt and push playfully against his young companions. But there was not much time for playing. Growing up is a serious business for young animals. Before the new calves are born those of this season must either have learnt enough of the ways and dangers of the veld to be able to forage for and take care of themselves or have died from accident or weakness.

“It was early evening. In the 'saka the buffalo were getting to their feet. Some stood close to trees scratching their sides with harsh, rasping sounds. A calf bawled and butted its mother vigorously in an endeavor to start a flow of milk. The old leader was still doubled up on the ground but at last, grunting, she scrambled to her feet and stood scenting the air and waving her great fringed ears. The fierce heat and brilliance of the sun had passed. The veld lay soft and violet-blue in the waning light. In the direction of the flats a single bright star had already come forth to grow steadily brighter and brighter as darkness settled over the land.

“The older bulls and cows were moving towards the open. Bong'kwé's mother joined the leaders and soon the Great Herd was on its way towards a pool

deep in the bed of a little river. The country was flat and the dry bed of the stream wound backwards and forwards. The bends were filled with dips which must have held water not so long before, as their sides and bottoms were covered with short green grass. The buffalo grazed along slowly. If a man had been fortunate enough to watch them it would have been nearly impossible to estimate how many animals there were. At one moment the entire veld seemed to be one solid moving mass of black. Then the mass broke up as parts of the herd fed down into the dips or scrambled across the creek to try the feed on the opposite side.

“Definite trails began to appear. Twisting, they led down from the thick bush and trees atop the rises on both sides of the stream. Along the valley they lost themselves and then reappeared, to grow more and more distinct and dusty as they approached the water hole. The scent of water became clearer and the buffalo quickened their pace. The old cow was in the lead, her head lifted as she eagerly sucked up the odors of the water hole. Behind, the herd crowded along, their horns clicking together, bellowing in their eagerness to drink. Their feet, stamping heavily into the worn trails,

raised clouds of dust. Suddenly the leader stopped with a fierce snort. The buffalo closest to her stopped also. A bull pawed the earth savagely with one forefoot. What was that smell that lay on the trail? What were those bent poles around the edge of the water? They had not been there the night before. The leader blew through her nose and, advancing, smelt at the trail. Her breath drove up two little columns of dust as she sniffed at the path, her muzzle close to the ground. She gave another harsh snort and stamped the ground. Man! A man had walked along the trail, and not long before, for his scent clung heavily to the dry ground. The old cow turned as if to wheel away but, reconsidering, cautiously moved back again. Sniffing at every step with her blunt square nose, she walked along the trail towards the water. The others followed her, their tails twitching and curling over their backs. Their neck hairs stood out stiff and straight. The bulls pawed the ground, standing to gaze belligerently about them. Bong'kwé, following close beside his mother, sensed that danger of some kind lurked in the air. He sniffed at the trail and drew into his nose a curious smell that was totally unknown to him. It was mixed with the smell of the

buffalo ahead of him but he could taste it. It was not unpleasant but it affected him much as did the smell of elephants. It was a scent that carried fear, for it was the scent of the unknown. The large buffalo knew what it was that had left that scent. They associated it at once with the villages, with dogs and pitfalls, and a few of them with death and blood and agony. But to Bong'kwé it was only something new, unknown and unpleasant.

“The leader stood at the lip of the depression in which the water lay. She gazed long and earnestly at those poles stuck in the mud at the water's edge and bent over to form bows. They did not move and certainly they looked harmless. But the scent of man was stronger here. She pawed the ground savagely to show her impatience and fear. Along the edges, and crowded together on the flat behind her, the herd stamped and shifted. Clouds of dust rose up and bellows and snorts sounded the indecision and impatience of the buffalo. Giving a protesting bellow the cow made up her mind that there was no immediate danger and led the way to the water. She avoided the bent poles and wading into the water drank thirstily, sucking the water loudly. Shoving and hooking at one another the herd



crowded down to the water. They tried to avoid the poles, but other buffalo pushed them onto them. In a moment they were stamped into the mud, and as the air became saturated with the smell of buffalo, churned mud, moldering vegetation, and water, the scent of man was overwhelmed and forgotten. Yet not entirely, for, their thirst slaked and some of the dust in their throats washed away, a few of the old bulls and cows crowded their way through the herd and, climbing the bank, moved restlessly back and forth across the trails that radiated from the pool like the spokes of a gigantic wheel. Here and there they came across the trails where the man had gone to and from the pool as he went to the bush to cut poles for his spring snares. The buffalo lowered their huge heads and blew the dust aggressively. Man, that creature that walked on two legs and left all manner of dangerous traps and holes behind him. Man, the killer, the chaser, the most thoroughly feared of all the creatures that walk the veld.

“Thus under the light of the stars and amidst eddies of dust Bong'kwé made his first acquaintance with the smell of man. It did not impress him forcibly then any more than his first smell of elephants

had engraved itself on his memory. But as the days passed and the Great Herd wandered across the veld bordering the flats, Bong'kwé was to meet that smell often. In this district, as you know, I'nkos, game trails and man trails are mixed and crossed as the marks a child might make were it playing with a stick in the dust.

“In the early morning as the buffalo fed back towards the 'sakas they often met flocks of guinea fowl running swiftly here and there after bugs. It is only early in the morning or late in the day just before the sun sinks that one can catch a glimpse of the life of the veld in this district. Where man is the animals and birds do not drink at the time of the height of the sun as they do far back in the veld. During the day the country seems lifeless. Perhaps a keen eye could detect a sleeping puku or an oribi lying close to the ground in the open. But save for an occasional wart-hog few animals walk abroad when the sun is hot and blazing.

“In the guinea fowl and the quales Bong'kwé found more friends and scouts. These birds are flighty and easily alarmed. Yet the guinea fowl often run close ahead or behind herds of game. Cackling and turning their heads constantly, they

run across the veld, appearing, like the wildebeest, to be always in a hurry. When watching game I have noticed that the animals always lift their heads to look and listen when a quale flies up with its swift burring of wings or calls shrill and harsh from the top of an ant-hill. What a scourge these birds must be to stalking lions! How often must they have a careful stalk brought to naught by suddenly disturbing a quale or a guinea fowl hidden amongst the bushes or grass behind which they are crouching.

“When the sun has gone and only the stars and moon light the veld, the guinea fowl and the quales have gone to bed. Only the plover, squatting close to the ground, remain to give warning to the grazing herds of the presence of a skulking killer. So it was that one night sudden death rushed amongst the herd of buffalo and Bong'kwé found his nostrils filled with the horrible smell of blood and the stench of lions and, ringing in his ears, the death bellow of a buffalo.

“The herd was out of the 'saka and feeding quietly along the banks of a donga. They had drunk and were busily cropping at the short grass. The night was still. There was no moon but the stars

shed a faint, silvery light over the veld. The buffalo loomed very black and solid as they moved slowly about. Now and again one would cease feeding and stand gazing about or climb the side of a dip, swinging its great head with its curving horns from side to side in time with the slow motion of its massive shoulders. They are powerful beasts, these buffalo, and the lions, slinking belly to the ground downwind, watching with keen, glittering eyes for a chance to strike, must have been very hungry or exceptionally brave. It was a ticklish matter, a question of life and death to attack such a mass of bone and muscle as that great herd of buffalo.

“The lions slunk along, keeping pace with the herd. The tawny shapes of two of them, both females, melted from bush to ant-hill, or flattened out so low as to be nearly invisible as they crossed an open space. They were nearly as powerful and strong as their mate. He was lurking in the bed of the donga keeping well behind the herd for fear they would get his wind. As he slunk along in the shadows, his hairy paws making no sound in the soft sand, he kept looking up at the banks, searching for a place up which he could rush at the unsuspecting buffalo above him. He could hear them.

A calf bawled, and once in a while a bigger buffalo came near the edge of the donga. Its hoofs rang dully on the hard ground.

“They had plenty of patience, those lions. They knew exactly what they wished to do and bided their time until conditions should be favorable. At last ahead of him the big male could see the trampled sand and crumbling banks that betokened the spot at which a game trail led down into and across the donga. He growled fiercely and made a bounding rush for the path. Above, as the lion burst into view on the donga’s edge, he found only a part of the herd in front of him. The buffalo were spread out over a big bend. The majority were out of sight feeding in the dips. Those in view closed their ranks rapidly and formed a compact mass of truculent animals. Bong’kwé found himself crowded hard between his mother and another big buffalo. He had heard the first savage growl and felt the hair on his back rise up. Now he could see nothing. He was squeezed too tightly in the herd. A tremendous roar broke forth. He could hear a sound like the galloping hoofs of a zebra. The lion was charging. Another roar and another. The air seemed to shake and tremble. Then Bong’kwé found himself run-





BACK AND FORTH THEY WANDERED DOWN THE BANKS OF THE  
STREAM.



ning. The herd had broken and stampeded before the roaring rush of that huge lion. The buffalo crashed away, churning up clouds of dust. Bong'kwé lost his mother in the excitement, but ahead of him he could dimly see the hindquarters of a buffalo rounding an ant-hill. He galloped faster to catch up. As he came rushing around the ant-hill a tawny shape seemed to rise from nowhere and launch itself on the buffalo ahead. There was a bawl of terror, a savage growl, and the ripping and tearing of tough green hide as the lion dragged with its great claws on the nose of the buffalo. A cloud of dust and the buffalo somersaulted heels over head, and as Bong'kwé dashed by terrified nearly out of his mind, he saw a great beast with dripping red mouth snarling at him viciously. It was standing over a buffalo with horns about four hands in length.

“He ran on and on, and eventually finding other buffalo, joined up with them and finally with his mother. Downwind as they were, he could smell the blood and entrails of the dead buffalo as the three lions tore at it. Horrid and terrible sounds drifted down on the breeze, and the stench of lion seemed to hang everywhere. It was long before

Bong'kwé rid his nostrils of that terrifying smell, and he never smelt the stench of lion again without recalling that first terrible experience with blood and death.

“The older buffalo seemed soon to forget the episode. Back and forth they wandered down the banks of the stream, meeting and joining up with the other scattered members of the herd until all were once again under the leadership of the old hairless cow.

“The next night the herd again passed along the banks of that donga. It offered the most succulent grass and was very tempting. From the spread-out formation of the herd a watcher would have thought that the killing of the night before had already been forgotten. But I doubt it, I'nkos, and even if they had forgotten so soon, the evil smell which hung around the spot and the yapping of the jackals and insane laughter of the hyenas fighting over the head and few remaining bones promptly recalled the tragedy. The bulls pawed the ground and blew angry snorts through their distended nostrils. Bong'kwé stayed close by his mother, and the old leader led her nervous and angry herd quickly past the malodorous spot.”



Shamanyati stopped speaking and stared meditatively at the dust before him. Then he looked up at me, "You know that lions hunt in that manner, I'nkos?" It was a question as well as a statement.

I nodded. "Yes," I replied. "Several times I have seen the evidence in the tracks on the veld, and once I actually found lions about to attack some water-buck in that way. Also that is the way in which lions stampede cattle out of a kraal into which they cannot or dare not enter. Yes, I know that that is true."

"It is very clever of the lions, I'nkos," said my tracker. "Yet I do not fully understand why they are so successful. Because there are two other directions in which the herd could run besides that which leads to the waiting lionesses. But nearly always the frightened animals run upon the hidden killers."

"Perhaps it is because those lions that do the killing are opposite the one who does the frightening," I said. "The herd runs straight away from the lion rushing at them and thus runs upon those behind."

"Perhaps, I'nkos," answered Shamanyati. "But buffalo? When they are suddenly frightened they usually run back upon their own tracks. You and



I have seen them do that many times when you have been shooting with your rifle. Do we not always leave the tracks by which we have found the herd and hide at the side so that when the herd, frightened by the noise of your shot and not knowing from whence the noise has come, back-tracks, you can have another opportunity of shooting? Indeed, I'nkos, I have heard you laugh many times at those hunters who did not know this and who thought that they were being charged when really the terrified animals were only trying to run away."

"True, old man," I agreed. "But in that case the buffalo have not seen us. They do not know from which direction the danger threatens. With the lion it is different. Him they can see as well as hear. And seeing him they run away from him, never thinking that possibly more lions are lying in wait down the wind where they are neither seen nor smelt."

We fell silent, thinking. No two animals hunt in exactly the same manner. Neither, for that matter, do any two animals ever act exactly alike under any given set of circumstances. They are just as variable and have as distinct personalities as human beings. They react to crowd or mob psychology in the same

manner as do humans. Nevertheless they are individuals, as anyone who has endeavored to tame a number of wild animals will soon tell you if you care to question him.

Shamanyati knocked out a pile of snuff and, having inhaled it deeply, picked up his story again.

“I had many pitfalls behind the village. In fact there were pits stretching along the boundaries of the flats nearly as far and long as the narrow 'sakas. Every hunter from every village dug pitfalls and stretched snares and there were many villages. There are two kinds of pitfalls. Roundish and very deep ones for pigs. These we usually dig only around the gardens, for the pig is a wanderer without any definite trails of his own. Only when he tries to push his way into the peanut lands through the fences of thorns can we be in any way certain of catching him. Then we make openings in the fences and dig pits under them and the pig, coming along, thinks that he has found a place where a lazy man has worked and pushes through. Plump—down he goes, and we have fine meat to eat and a fine new skin to stretch upon a tom-tom.

“The pitfall for buffalo and antelope is long and narrow. At the top it is very little wider than the

breadth of the shoulders of two men standing side by side. At the bottom it is only the width of a hoe. An animal falling into a pitfall jams itself. Its legs are squeezed tightly together, and if the animal is large and fat they do not reach the bottom. Several times I have found buffalo in my pitfalls upside down. I think that they felt their front legs sinking into the hole and gave a mighty jump and so turned over and lit on their backs. When they do this they always break their necks.

“These long pitfalls we dig in rows. I used to dig mine along the edges of 'sakas into which I knew that buffalo were wont to go or across the points of 'sakas which stretched out into the open bush veld. If they are caught far out in the open when the sun rises, buffalo and other game will most often make for such points and follow the 'saka back to safety and shade. I also dug pits around the water holes, at crossings by dongas and other places which seemed likely spots for game to wander. So the entire country in a wide line around the grazing and water of the flat lands was a maze of traps and pitfalls.

“The leader had not taken her herd into this part of the veld. It lay close to the villages and as yet

there were water and grass on the veld behind. But the sun was daily growing fiercer and fiercer. The nights were losing their chill. Winds blew all day, and the water in the deep holes of the donga beds was becoming foul and rank. Slowly the herds of game were being forced closer and closer to the edge of the open country. As they congregated, herd upon herd, the grazing became scarcer and scarcer. Many of the animals were forced to feed during the day in order to crop sufficient grass to fill their bellies. Small herds joined the larger ones until some of the herds of eland and buffalo and wildebeest seemed to cover the entire veld when they spread out to graze. Bong'kwé's herd had increased still more. If it had been large before it was now enormous. Many of the old bulls that had roamed alone before were now members. Without question all submitted to the leadership of the old hairless cow with the worn-away horns.

“Occasionally these old bulls would wander away from the herd, and feeling and smelling their way cautiously, trek out onto the flats. But it was a dangerous procedure and one not often attempted. The ground on the flats was still soggy in the dips and the going was hard and heavy. Still grass was

plentiful there. It was sweet and the water was clear. The temptation was great and the dangers of the previous year's trips were faded and half forgotten.

“One night when the leader had taken her herd down close to this dangerous veld, Bong'kwé saw and smelt his first pitfall. The herd had broken through a narrow 'saka and were heading for the grass under the open trees beyond. Instead of leading the way directly, the leader had swung at an angle and browsed along parallel to the 'saka from which she had just emerged. Bong'kwé, running at the edge of the herd where the calves usually were, saw a line of fallen trees interspersed with piles of earth. Suspecting nothing, he investigated. Between the piles of yellowish sandy soil lay grass. It looked somewhat out of place lying so flat and regular, but there were many stranger sights on the veld. He walked nearer, his head swinging close to the ground. Then Bong'kwé stopped sharp. Queer, that smell. What was it? Then he remembered. It was the smell that had hung around the water hole that night his mother and the leader had been so perturbed—the night the big bulls had wandered restlessly to and fro and pawed the ground.



It was the smell of man. Bong'kwé recoiled. But curiosity was strong. He walked slowly along the line. The smell of man was very faint. Soon it would be gone altogether. Bong'kwé became more used to it and again approached one of those flat masses of yellow grass. He was suspicious now and sniffed his way deliberately. To his surprise he found that that grass was not lying on the ground. A musty, dampish smell came to him. It was like the smell that came from the deep ant-bear holes he had smelt at many times. It frightened him, this combination of man smell and smell of deep holes. He went back to the herd and thus saved himself from being speared by the man who had dug those pits."

## CHAPTER VIII

“**T**HE flats. Those enormous stretches of high grass cut with bent lagoons and rivers that begin and end nowhere; dry for a short season but flooded with water during and after the rains. For a distance that it would require five days to walk they lie on either side of the big winding river. In some parts the bush veld approaches close to the river. In others the flats are so wide a man cannot see the far side even in the early morning when the air is clear. During the day heat waves dance over them and game herds can be seen walking upside down in the air. Pans of clear water appear, but they are not really there, and objects look farther or nearer than they actually are. Along the edge of the bush veld a few tall straight bottle-palms stand and serve as landmarks to any one wandering far

out in the depths of the grass. In a few spots on the vast flat trees cling together in islands. The ground under them is choked with a dense growth of vines and rank grass. Near the river scattered thorn trees grow huge and bushy. Little grass grows under them, and their yellowish curlicue seed pods can be seen lying everywhere. It is not a good place to walk or camp, for thorns lie thick. They are long, grayish-white, and very sharp. If a man steps on one it runs far into the foot, for they are tough and do not break easily.

“This part of the veld is not burnt until the last. The flats do not dry out until the end of the cold season. Even then large parts will not burn. But shortly after the Great Herd of buffalo had come out of the far veld and was roaming close to the kasakas, the flats were afire. A pall of heavy yellow smoke hung low. The air had a bitter, cutting taste. Close to the lagoons and in the dips where the grass was damp and green the fire only smoldered and clouds of smoke billowed up. Along the rises and close to the edge of the bush the fire ran faster, roaring at the tall grass with leaping flames. At night one could see from the village lines of fire, one behind the other, dancing and flickering away to-

ward the banks of the invisible river. By day twisting columns of smoke traveled across the flats. The columns bent and swayed with the whirling wind like gigantic dancers. If they came close one could hear their curious moaning roar and see the black dust whirled from the ground and sucked up into the column.

“Vultures and hawks and eagles sailed high in the sky after the fires, watching with keen eyes to discover anything the long grass might have kept hidden until then. In the evening and early morning flocks of geese, ducks, and teal wheeled about as they determined on a lagoon on which to pass the day. Dull bluish herons flapped along and occasionally flocks of white egrets flew from their nesting grounds in the papyrus near the river toward the herds of cattle at the edge of the flats. There they would spend the day, gravely walking about the big beasts, picking ticks and other insects off their hides.

“When the flats are dry, paths lead across them toward the river banks. There many of us have huts where we live until the rains come. Along the banks we can grow tobacco and grain and a few sweet potatoes even when the heat is greatest and all the

veld is dry and waterless and burnt. Our cattle, too, we drive to the river. They feed during the day on the sweet grass amongst the dips. We lose many from crocodiles and a few from lions, but we would lose all from thirst were we so foolish as to try to keep them at the villages. The cattle have gone down to the river now, I'nkos, and that is why the milk for your tea is late in reaching here in the morning.

“After the long grass has been burnt, many steep ant-hills appear. Higher than a man, they had been hidden until now in the growth of grass. In some parts great herds of lechwe feed over the flats. Puku abound. They are seen everywhere in herds, in small parties and singly. They are in the dips, along the shores of all the lagoons, and asleep in the open on the flat rises. In other parts mixed herds of zebra and wildebeest graze, and occasionally roan and less often eland are seen. Reed-buck are common. At night they whistle to each other from the ant-hills or bound gracefully from the thickets under the island of trees. Oribi also are numerous, but I have never seen them in parties of more than five or six and I have never seen warthogs or bush-pigs on the flats. The last are dirty



drinkers and are satisfied with the rank water of the last few pans that remain at this season.

“One evening the leader led her herd down the banks of the dry stream. Stopping only here and there to crop at some particularly tempting patch of grass, the old cow resolutely passed one water hole after another and headed down the trails that led toward the flats. Behind her the herd followed, looming huge and monstrous in the half-light as they pushed through the thickets and bulked uncertainly among the scattered trees.

“The rise of ground swung closer to the stream-bed. The thickets became denser and the dongas more crooked and deeper. The trails converged. Dusty and gray, they showed up sharp against the black of the grass. The buffalo disappeared into the darker darkness of the thickets. Only the breaking of branches and the grunts of one buffalo as it tried to push past its fellows gave notice that a herd was on the move. Behind in the open, where the herd had passed, dust hung in the air and there was a distinct cattle-like smell about. The Great Herd was on its way to the flats.

“At the edge of the thickets the leader hesitated. To one side of her a line of prone trees indicated

that pitfalls lay waiting for some unsuspecting animal. A faint odor of marshiness drifted from the flats beyond. The herd spread out, sniffing eagerly with wrinkled muzzles. That marshy smell told of water and grass. It was long since they had found a spot at which they could graze their fill. But there was another smell upon the breeze. And that sound! Rhythmic and powerful, it came throbbing softly through the night. There was something threatening in that steady beat.

“Away out on the flats a jackal yapped. The high bark was reassuring. The leader turned her great head. Then she moved forward and the herd behind her became a blacker blob against the night as the buffalo massed on the trails.

“The throbbing grew louder and more insistent. The curious, acrid smoky smell became more pungent. Off to one side towards the rising ground, which now swept away in a long curve, a glow broke the solidarity of the night. Against its rise and fall of light the conical shapes of hut roofs appeared cut sharp in a line, like zebras feeding in a row upon the horizon. The disturbing noise and smell crowded out all others. But no, not all. The leader snorted and the herd, moving amongst the

ant-hills which dot the flat, quickened their pace. The sweetish smell of sweat, of humans, mixed thoroughly but unmistakably with the pervading smell of burning cow dung, cattle, dogs, and the high smell of goats. Bong'kwé felt unsafe. The smell from human habitations and domestic animals was new to him. He did not like it. It was too strong and all-pervading. It clung in his nostrils, excluding other smells.

“The trails passed within two arrow flights of the village. But the herd was safe. There was no moon and the villagers, intent on their dance, did not hear the faint clicking of horns that told of the passing of the buffalo. The song of the dancers rose shrilly. Clouds of dust kicked up by the many stamping feet swirled up from the floor of the cattle kraal and drifted down over the buffalo trails. The drums throbbed and quivered under the frantic pounding of their beaters: *Tao saba, tao saba tse'foro tse'foro. Tao saba, tao saba tse'foro tse'foro.*

“Near enough to hear the song but not understanding it, the Great Herd swept silently along under the moonless night. Only a blacker splotch showed their location as the hairless cow led them past the village.

“The trails were those of last season. Yet the leader had no difficulty as she led her herd straight across the flat and, leaving the ant-hills behind, headed for what appeared in the night to be a dense mass of close-growing trees. What was it that guided her so surely? Was it the old trails, the faint traces left by an occasional single bull that had ventured down investigating? Or was it memory? The leader was old and many, many seasons had passed since she had first trodden those trails. It was all familiar ground to her. Even the village was so familiar as to cause little concern, although she watched it closely. She knew that there were dogs there—dogs whose frantic yelpings might betray the passing of the herd and bring their masters with spears and bows and guns. Guns were those frightful things which men held to their shoulders and with which they hurt and sometimes killed from a distance, making a tremendous noise at the same moment.

“Was she thinking these thoughts as the tom-toms grumbled and throbbed as if insisting with their rhythm upon man’s omnipotence? In any case the leader quickened her pace and the herd, anxious to reach the rich grazing promised by the

now stronger marshy smell, followed eagerly. Bong'kwé stepped along smartly just behind his mother. Lately he had been inclined to run somewhat by himself. He was growing big and feeling independent. No longer did he nurse. But those heavy smells and the beat of the tom-toms were very disquieting. He did not feel quite so sure of himself that night. His mother, however, paid scant attention to him as he stumped along. Her thoughts were all on the rich grazing in the land beyond the belt of trees just ahead.

“Crowding against one another, the herd of buffalo slid and tumbled down a steep bank. Branches and vines closed overhead. It became even darker than it had been back on the flat. The ground smelt very damp and soggy. The powerful beasts, massed tight and hurrying eagerly, smashed their way through the thickets, unconsciously opening up the age-old paths which led from the small flat onto the enormous open stretch of the true flats beyond. The paths were tangled by the rainy season's growth. Only a very few buffalo had been through and they had slipped rather than forced their way through the mass of crisscross vegetation. The herd scrambled up again, crum-



bling the sandy banks, and then the flats spread out before them.

“What a wonderful country! New to the calves but ever new even to the old bulls and cows. An odor of marshiness, water lilies and an odd, oily, gaseous smell as of grass rotting under water drifted to the eager, distended nostrils. There was a smell of antelope. Somewhere near, a zebra neighed shrilly and was answered by a hoarse, throaty bark from the stallion. It was the flats; dangerous in that they offered no cover and no protection from the sun, but rich and tempting with their dips carpeted with sweet green grass and their lagoons and broad deep pans of sweet, fine water.

“The herd scattered. Most, their throats tight and dry from the dust of the trails, drank noisily from a near-by pan. The older buffalo wandered ruthlessly amongst the blue and gold water lilies. Certain that their broad splay hoofs would prevent them from bogging, they splashed up and down the shallow water, mashing and tearing up the dank blobs which in daylight were so beautiful and delicate.

“Bong'kwé, having drunk his fill, nosed along the pan's edge. He was not yet sufficiently certain

of his strength to venture far into the water and the sticky mud which lay beneath it. Some of the other calves only partially interested in the grass wandered uncertainly or nursed, holding their unwilling mothers from the tempting water. A few, among which was Bong'kwé, explored with their noses the strange and entrancing smells left by the herds of puku and the tall, long-legged cranes and storks.

“His ears drooping, Bong'kwé sniffed along a trail. Suddenly his head came up and out in the belligerent posture of the buffalo. His ears stiffened. A strange, rapidly repeating noise was coming from the surface of the pan. There was a flapping and a splashing of water and then the quick beat of wings. Bong'kwé relaxed. Ducks. Circling overhead, they flew in a wide circle, whistling excitedly, loath to leave the pan.

“Throughout the night the herd grazed over this new land. The calves soon filled their bellies. Some gamboled, but before the first chillness which foretold the coming of dawn the majority were lying down. The grass was so thick and plentiful that the herd, numerous as it was, did not shift a great deal. Up and down a dip they fed, now climbing the

sides, now moving slowly along the bottom. It was indeed a fine place, a land to be visited frequently. Bong'kwé had never been on such sweet grazing before. Until then the grass he had cropped had been dryish and far from sweet. That night he ate and ate, and his belly swelled out on each side of him until it was as hard and round as a pumpkin. Stuffed to completion, he lay down and contentedly watched the others. He dozed a little and then, finding that the herd had moved ahead, got to his feet to follow, cropping at more grass as he went.

It was fortunate that the grass was thick and plentiful. The leader started on the return journey just as the cold mists that foretold the coming of dawn were curling up from off the surfaces of the deep lagoons and wide pans. The herd had not grazed far out onto the flat and it was not long before they were crowding shoulder to shoulder, pushing their way through the 'saka-like thicket that lined the bottom of the dry lagoon-bed separating the large from the small flat. Once upon the trails the herd moved along rapidly. There was no grass to tempt them. In any case their bellies were full, fuller and tighter than they had been for days and days. Not a sound came to disturb them as they

swept up the trails past the village. Even the leader was so full of grass that she failed to utter a snort as the smells of the village drifted down to her.

“Bong'kwé shuffled along, his tired feet kicking up clouds of dust. It had been a fairly long jaunt from the kasaka to the big flat. The excitement of the new smells and new land had been tiring. He would be glad when the leader came to a stop in some tangled 'saka and he could lie down to rest and digest his food.

“A faint light flushed the sky. The trees gradually assumed definite shape from out the blackness. The herd reached the line of pitfalls and the thickets at the edge of the flat. They skirted the first and disappeared from sight amongst the small trees and thick brush. Behind them in the village a cock crowed lustily, announcing the dawn.

“As the herd came out of the thick stuff onto the open tree country along the banks of the stream the leader slackened her pace. Slowly she moved along, grazing here and there. The herd spread out behind. The light was definite. The sun was nearly up, but the herd was safe behind the screen of thick bush that stretched along the edge of the flats. Bong'kwé wanted to lie down. He was so full that

further grazing did not interest him. But he could not, for although the buffalo grazed they moved steadily up the banks of the dry river. Farther and farther they went—past the spot where the lions had attacked them and past the point where they had emerged from the 'saka the evening before. It seemed a long distance to Bong'kwé. But the smell of the village still lingered in the nostrils of the leader, and it was not until the sun was an arm's length above the trees that she turned from the banks and headed for the safety of the kasaka. Once there, the herd plunged in deep. Then, swinging around, they came back to lie down close to the spot at which their trails entered. Thus sleeping, dozing, scratching their sides and chewing their rich cuds, they passed the day in safety. The wind which blew from their trails would tell them if any man followed them into the 'saka.

“The next night the leader did not take her herd back to the flats. In spite of the rich grass which was so tempting she remained along the banks of the stream and drank the smelly water from one of the deep but rapidly drying water holes in the stream-bed. Can you explain that action, I'nkos? Why should that old cow refrain from



taking her herd down those trails two nights in succession? Was she capable of reasoning that it might be dangerous to go again so soon after their first trip; that possibly the men of the village had seen those tracks and might be watching and lying in wait? Men do not attack buffalo at night, but that old leader might not have realized that. Of men she was afraid. That I do know. Her reason for holding that Great Herd of buffalo back from the sweet grazing and sweet water of the flats I do not know. It was probably a wise precaution, but what man can understand the mind of an animal, I'nkos? Who can realize what the reasons and motives are that govern the actions of a buffalo so old and so wise as that hairless cow? She had lived long and escaped many, many dangers. Think for a moment of all the strange, terrible and exciting occurrences through which she had come to be the leader of the Great Herd. Indeed, although a cow she was a buffalo among buffalo. Yet every herd which I have hunted has been led by a cow. Buffalo, elephants, zebras, and even many of the antelope pay obedience to the female. Truly, I'nkos, the formation and organization of a herd of animals is a mysterious thing. The old bulls, whose

great strength and whose cunning and savagery one would expect to render them most fit to lead, do not run with the herds at all. Solitary and alone, they stay by themselves although nearly always found in the vicinity of some large herd. And after the break-up of the herds, which occurs when the grass begins to grow long, how is it that they reform and how does the leader of the year before surround herself with a herd again? Do the others remember and recognize her leadership? Never have I seen nor have I ever found any evidence to lead me to believe that the cows fight for such supremacy. Bulls sometimes fight. And terrible as is the fight between two huge bull buffalo, it is not for supremacy of the herd but rather for the privilege of some particular cow."

"What makes you think and ask such questions, Shamanyati?" I interrupted.

"How do I know, I'nkos?" he replied. "Perhaps it is because I love the animals of the veld. Although I hunt them to kill them, they are yet my friends. I know them well. Some I have known for a long, long time, just as I knew Bong'kwé. And one grows fond of one's old friends even though in one sense we be enemies." He was silent for a while and then,

looking up at me wistfully: "Do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand," I answered softly. I had not realized that the old man was capable of feeling so. Heretofore I had always thought of him as a killer, a hunter pure and simple. A fine friend and brave, but one in whom little sentiment lurked. It was a different side of his character he was showing me now—one which he kept in the background as if ashamed to show that he did, after all, have feelings and was not only the tireless, accurate tracker and mine of information I had carelessly assumed him to be. And as I, too, had such feelings for animals as he did, our friendship became the closer for the glimpse of his other self which he had vouchsafed me.

"For the length of time it takes the moon to wane," Shamanyati had picked up his story again, "the leader led her herd back and forth between the flats and kasaka. Not every night did she lead them down to the rich grazing. Sometimes the buffalo went down the trails two and three nights in succession. Then again they remained behind the long thin 'sakas for as many nights.

"Once the herd was shot at as it returned to the kasaka. One of the men from the village had hidden

himself on an ant-hill close to the trails. The herd was late that morning. The small flat was faintly lit by the coming of the dawn as the leader led them rapidly along the trails. She had not noticed how long they had lingered among the grass-covered dips. Now that the sun was about to come up and find the buffalo blackening the flat close by the village, she was nervous and afraid. The big buffalo moved so swiftly the younger calves had difficulty in keeping pace. Bong'kwé, longer-legged than the others and bigger and stronger, kept even with his mother. He was breathing heavily. The dust was thick and his belly was full and heavy. Suddenly as the herd split up along the different trails among the ant-hills a tremendous noise burst forth. It was like the thunder that comes with the squalls of rain. A buffalo somewhere grunted a deep savage grunt which changed into a moan of pain and rage. The leader burst into a gallop, and plunging and snorting, the herd followed, churning up the sand and raising great dense clouds of dust. On they tore and did not slacken until, bursting and crashing through the small 'saka, they found themselves by the banks of the stream. Restless and excited, they pushed along

smartly, the herd a compact mass of worried buffalo. Behind dogs barked excitedly. They could hear a buffalo bellowing and the yells of man. Once or twice the leader hesitated and looked back as if undetermined whether or not to return and try to help the buffalo that bellowed so beseechingly and so savagely back on the flat. Thinking better of any such half-formed thought, she led the way toward the kasaka and, reaching it, plunged deep into its safety and did not swing around until far in its tangled interior.

“To Bong'kwé the whole episode had been frightening and inexplicable. That terrific burst of noise, the breath-taking gallop through the dust, and the barking of the dogs and shouts of men, had not connected itself with death and danger. He did not know that that noise had come from a gun, one of those old guns into which so much black powder used to be jammed that they sometimes burst asunder when they were fired off. Neither had Bong'kwé actually connected those fearful shouts with men. The whole occurrence was associated in his brain with the village and the hateful man smells which came from it. That was all he could have known.



“That night the buffalo stayed far back up the stream. They had been badly frightened and would not venture down even near the small 'saka. But the second night found them on their way to the flats again. The grass was so dry and scanty they were forced to look for more food than the stream banks could offer. As the buffalo slowly came out onto the small flat, the horrid smell that had filled the air the night the lions attacked again rose from the ground and stuck in their nostrils. There was no stench of lion about, but the smell of man and dogs mixed with the horrible smell of blood and cut-up meat. From the village the throb and beat of a tom-tom came insistently drumming on the ears of the nervous herd. The buffalo snorted and wheeled. Bong'kwé, for he was growing up, pawed at the dust and blew through his nose as he saw the big bulls do.

“Moving in a wide circle, the herd rapidly passed the village with its beating drum. The song, *Tao saba, tao saba, tao saba tse'foro tse'foro*, which told of stomachs full of meat, faded away as the buffalo climbed out of the dry lagoon-bed and spread out on the wide flat to graze their fill and drink the sweet pure water of the pans.”

## CHAPTER IX

“**T**HE herd did not return to the 'sakas the next morning. Throughout the night, as they grazed, the leader moved slowly farther out onto the flats. Early in the morning as the sun was coming up the buffalo drank from a deep lagoon that lay, crescent-shaped, near an island of trees. The mists disappeared and the sun became warmer. But instead of leading the way toward the shelter of the trees, as one might have expected, the old cow remained out in the open. Grazing a little, for she was already full, she wandered slowly about and the herd lazily followed her.

“All day the herd grazed and slept and wandered. Nothing appeared to disturb them. A flock of white cattle egrets visited them. Bong'kwé found them just as friendly as the small tick birds

with which he was familiar. As he lay on the ground, the hot sun burning into his back, an egret approached him walking stiffly because of its hooked feet. The bird came up close and, examining Bong'kwé's hide most critically, picked a tick off his shoulder. Having thus established a basis for friendship the bird climbed on the young buffalo's back and, walking all over him, subjected him to a thorough scrutiny and tick-ridding process. Bong'kwé became so accustomed to feeling the bird's feet on his hide that he dozed, waking now and then to see other egrets walking about and over the other buffalo near him. One dainty white bird he saw walk up to a big bull lying half asleep and, after staring it in the face with its head on one side, pick a tick off the end of the buffalo's nose.

“During the fiercest heat of the day one or two of the oldest bulls, buffalo that had not been with the herd for long, got to their feet and slowly walked to the lagoon to drink. Afterwards they explored the island of trees that seemed to offer such tempting shade. But the undergrowth was such a tangled mass and the ground so mushy and covered so thickly with moldy vegetation and rotting vines and leaves that they returned to the

herd. The leader would have taken her herd there before had she not known that the place was unsuitable.

“Afternoon came. The heat waves which had been wavering and dancing over the flats faded out and the air became clearer but bluish. The herd of buffalo which up to now had been hidden in one of the dips appeared on the horizon. One after another, in groups of five and ten, the great beasts wandered up the sides of the shallow valley and stood on the ridge. The faint breeze felt good. They looked about them. In the distance a low blackish rough line told where the crossing lay in the dry lagoon-bed. Islands of trees dotted the great expanse of flats and all about the buffalo were the steep, dark-colored ant-hills. No man intruded his presence into the huge stretch of veld, and the buffalo were well satisfied.

“Cropping at the grass here and there, the herd went down to the lagoon. A herd of red puku bounded from the grazing around the water's edge, and after running to the tops of the rise opposite, turned and stood watching the buffalo as they waded in the water. Bong'kwé splashed about and even ventured to lie down in the shallow water





A SCALY SHAPE GRIPPING WITH MANY WHITE TEETH TO THE NOSE OF THE FIGHTING ANIMAL.





near the edge. The wetness felt good to his hide, hot and prickly from so much sun. He soon had enough, and splashing out, shook himself on the bank and then turned his attention to the grass. One or two big buffalo waded far out into the lagoon and stood with the water lapping against their sides. A cow was digging up papyrus roots out of the mud with her horns. As she raised her head to look about she was a ludicrous sight. Her face was muddy and dripping water. From one horn a mess of roots and grass dangled and dripped. With a snort she tossed her head and the mess went flying out into the lagoon.

“The sun was sinking rapidly. The flats had lost some of their brilliance. The majority of the buffalo had left the water of the lagoon and were wandering about the grass-covered slopes or sniffing at the puku trails. On the rise the leader stood gazing over the level stretch of country as if trying to decide in which direction the best grazing and the greatest safety lay. Suddenly a terrified bellow broke the quietness of the evening. Bong'kwé whirled about and stared toward the sound. It had come from a young two-year-old bull that had been enjoying a last drink from the lagoon. Now Bong'-

kwé could see it struggling frantically. Its feet churned up the mud and its back was arched in a desperate effort to pull its muzzle from the water. Muffled, watery bellows and grunts of pain came from the laboring animal. A tremendous effort and it seemed about to win clear. As its head came out of the water Bong'kwé, staring fascinated at the struggle, could see a scaly shape gripping with many white teeth to the nose of the fighting animal. A long greenish body appeared floating on the surface, and Bong'kwé could distinguish an unmoving expressionless eye and a long row of horrible teeth. The thing, whatever it was, gave a lurch. A great tail appeared and thrashed the water. The buffalo bellowed and strained. The water boiled, and slowly but surely the buffalo's knees gave and its head was dragged under the water. The tail splashed up again. Water flew in all directions. Then abruptly the turmoil subsided and Bong'kwé saw the hind-quarters of the buffalo slide off the mud and disappear. A trail of bubbles and a muddy eddy showed that the body was being towed toward the deep water in the middle of the lagoon. Then all traces vanished.

“The light was fading rapidly. But Bong'kwé

stood staring at the surface of the water as if hypnotized. He shook his head and snorted. He ran a short way and then pulled up and stared at the spot where the buffalo had been and then at the water. What had happened? Something had come out of the water and seized the buffalo and dragged it in so that it had disappeared altogether from sight. Bong'kwé knew that the buffalo was dead as surely as if someone had told him. But what had killed it?

“The entire herd had been spectators of the tragic struggle. Some of them had seen such fights before and they stamped and pawed. The leader roved restlessly back and forth, grunting and snorting. Buffalo cling together. She and the other big buffalo wanted to help. But what could they do? This half-seen thing that had risen silently from the lagoon was not a thing which they could fight. How could they hook and stamp something they could not see underneath the water? It was frightening and maddening.

“Truly, I'nkos,” continued Shamanyati, looking up at me, “the crocodile is a terrible creature. He is so tremendously powerful, and of all the preying animals he is the only one that gives no warning

of his presence. He leaves no smell, for he is in the water. He cannot be seen, because he swims beneath the surface. And quick! I do not believe that there is another creature on the veld that, for its size, is so deadly, so swift in its movements, and so strong as the crocodile. He it is that kills more animals than any other. The lion is a laggard compared to the crocodile. And there are so very, very many of them. Every bit of water is a home for them. On the banks of the river, lying on the sand bars, floating on the water motionless and looking like some knobby piece of wood, or sunk just below the surface, their bodies drifting with the current and the tips of their noses and their eyes just above the water, they are everywhere. Death, a horrible, strangling, drowning death. Ugh, but how I hate and fear them. For they kill many people as well as animals. Many women and children going to fetch water never return to their huts. When we have gone to look for them we have found only the marks of their feet at the water's edge, a broken pot cast down in fright, and perhaps the long narrow footprint of a crocodile.

“Little wonder that Bong'kwé was frightened and sorely puzzled. Before his eyes he had seen



one of his companions dragged, struggling and bellowing, into the water. That was the water which he drank so greedily and into which he had watched his mother and the other big buffalo wade and splash.

“Curiosity overcame his fear. He stalked stiff-legged toward the scene of the struggle. Sniffing and blowing through his nose, he investigated. Mud, buffalo, and torn roots: those smells were familiar. Was there anything else? He sniffed some more, then recoiled swiftly. Turning, he plunged out of the mud and gained the firm ground. His feet had sunk deep into the churned mud and that had scared him. But there had been another smell there—one which he did not know. It was faint and had an almost watery flavor. But it was there and Bong'kwé realized that he had found an additional danger, one that appeared unseen and unknown from the depths of the innocent-looking water. A danger which meant a horrible death if not avoided.

“The old cow watching from the rise snorted and moved away. The herd drifted after her and soon the tragic happening had faded from the minds of the buffalo as they grazed along and up and down the slips of rich grass. You know, I'nkos,

animals are very much like us. They do not mourn over a member of the herd that has been killed. There is no affection between one buffalo and another excepting between the cow and her young calf. So it is with us in the village. If a man dies we make a great deal of noise and we dance and drink beer and kill many of his cattle. But it is not from grief unless the mother mourns her son's going. We do those things so that the man's spirit may not return to frighten and annoy us. The buffalo, of course, do not know about spirits, and as they do not mourn they go about their business. Animals are sensible creatures not to surround themselves with spirits and other frightening things. I do not believe all that the witch doctors tell us. I am old and have seen much and I know that few of the things with which these old men threaten us take place. But most of the village believes. And that is, of course, good for the witch doctors, for they make much in presents and gifts. But from me they get very little, although I always send them some meat so that they will not be offended with me."

Shamanyati chuckled to himself and there was a twinkle in his eyes as he looked at me. I smiled,

thinking of some of the tales I had heard of witch doctoring. I had wondered if the witch doctors succeeded in hoodooing everyone. It rather seemed not, yet in all natives there is a background of superstition never entirely overcome by even the wisest.

Doubtless Shamanyati performed some secret rites of his own before he went out on his hunting. He was like another hunter of mine who never went out unless the bones fell correctly at the first throwing. I had often watched him throw the three curiously carved little fish and noticed that his interpretation of their position was governed largely by the time of day and state of the weather.

The old hunter sneezed violently. Evidently his snuff was stronger than usual. Then he spat satisfyingly and settled down to resume his story.

“For the next few days and nights the herd of buffalo wandered about the flats. When the sun came up they lay in the dips and dozed and chewed their cuds. The flies were bothersome and the heat was terrific. But there was ample sweet grass and the water did not stink. Once they crossed a man path, but that was the only trace of the hateful presence that they had come upon. A few people

had doubtless gone and come across the flats from the villages to the garden and cattle out-posts on the river banks, but the buffalo had not seen them nor had they been seen. The heat haze distorts everything so queerly. And the herd lay hidden in the dips where one would not see them unless from very close by.

“It happened one day that the herd in its movements across the flats approached the river bank. As Bong'kwé grazed along he noticed a smell which was familiar and yet strange. He sniffed, interested, forgetting his grazing. His eyes could pick up tracks much like those left by buffalo. But the scent was different. Bong'kwé lifted his head and stared around him. There was nothing in sight save the members of his herd and a few groups of puku scattered here and there over the face of the flats. He sniffed some more and then, giving up the puzzle, continued grazing.

“It was the tracks left by a herd of cattle that the buffalo had crossed. Bong'kwé had not seen cattle yet, and those whose tracks he had sniffed were safely barricaded in a kraal for the night. Buffalo and cattle are very much alike, and, on the flats, graze over much the same country. Some day

Bong'kwé unquestionably would see his tame brothers grazing, but it would be from afar, for the leader knew that with herds of cattle there are always men. She could not know that the man smell drifting to her from a herd of cattle came, more often than not, from a young boy and not from an armed man.

“The river itself was an interesting place to Bong'kwé. It was the largest stretch of water he had seen, and there was much succulent grazing to be found along its banks. Here, too, Bong'kwé had his first taste of mealie stalks. The herd happened on a small garden planted farther from the huts than most. There was a low barricade of bushes thrown around it, sufficient protection against oribi and duiker, but of no avail against the powerful buffalo accustomed to the denseness of the 'sakas. The leader smashed her way into the garden without hesitation. These places were never guarded, she knew. The herd followed her and in no time the spot which had shown a fine stand of young grain was flattened out and covered with buffalo munching on the sweetish leaves and stalks. Bong'kwé liked what he did manage to filch from the bigger buffalo. But the garden was small and



the herd was big and soon the leader was on her way to the grass of the dips and rises. Behind them the buffalo left the garden a trampled mass of roots and broken stalks. The owner when he next visited it would find that his laborious clearing of the veld had gone for naught, and the season was too far along to plant again.

“The river wound lazily through the flats in long, slow bends. There were many backwaters covered, at the end of the dry season, with dense heavy water grass. The river rises and falls a great distance. When the rains come the now dry dongas run with water and the big river swells and swells. The water becomes brown and full of mud, sand and bushes, leaves and dry mealie stalks from the river-bank gardens. As even more and more rain pours down, the lagoons fill up and the pans spread out until the flats are covered with a great sheet of water. Except in a few places one cannot see this water because of the grass which grows above the height of a man riding on a horse. When the flats have dried out and the grass has been burnt away; when the twisting columns of dust sway on the horizon and the winds blow strong and hard, the river is shallow and the backwaters are dry. In many

stretches the river can be crossed by wading, but no man should attempt this alone because of the crocodiles.

“Early one afternoon the leader headed for the river bank. The herd had been lying all day in one of the broad dips. The sun had been very hot and the winds had blown clouds of dust and the ashes from burnt grass over the dozing buffalo. Their throats were dry. Once at the river the leader had led the way along the banks until she found her way barred by the stub end of a broad backwater. Pushing her way through the mass of tall papyrus that had escaped the fires, she came out onto a wide level expanse that had been covered with water not long before. Now it was a pasture land of exceptional richness. The ground underfoot was still soggy but buffalo are built to go into such ground. Lechwe and the stititunga can visit such places, but the other antelope and the zebra would sink deep and have a difficult time moving about.

“Bong'kwé found the backwater a splendid place. He grazed for a while and then wandered down to the edge of the river which lapped gently with little waves against the muddy bank. The water was shallow. No danger from crocodiles

threatened, but Bong'kwé was still nervous about approaching it. He drank in water hardly reaching to his knees. As nothing untoward occurred and as there were many older buffalo farther out, he gained confidence and lay down suddenly with a splash. Mud and water oozed up his sides and covered his legs. His hot skin relaxed and his blood cooled off. For a while he lay there and then, dripping and muddy, clambered to his feet and, splashing out of the water, returned to his grazing.

"A shining lane of moonlight danced across the river and, coming up the backwater, lost itself in the mud. The papyrus stood out on either side straight and sheer, the feathery tops waving gently in the night wind. Fish jumped and set in motion circles of little waves which spread until they became so wide they exhausted themselves. Not far away a rookery of egrets awoke and made a great to-do about something and then subsided. A plover shrieked on the bank. At that sudden sound the leader raised her head and listened intently. But it was nothing. Possibly a jackal or some other small animal had tried to stalk the sleeping bird.

"Moving about in the moonlight the buffalo

loomed as solid black bulks. But screened by the walls of papyrus around the backwater the herd was very safe. Who or what would attack them at night in such a place? Lions could not stampede them in such a pocket, and men did not walk abroad at night. The only possible danger was from crocodiles, and the shallowness of the water rendered attack by them unlikely. The herd was safe enough and Bong'kwé, following the example of many others, lay down and rested. Grass was so plentiful and so rich that he could fill his belly in a comparatively short time. Already the stay on the flats had made a difference. He was plumper. His ribs were well covered and his coat, although it was scraggy, had a well-fed sheen. The big buffalo, particularly the cows, were better covered than when they first came down to the land behind the villages. A buffalo requires a tremendous amount of food to put on fat. It is only toward the end of the rainy season that they carry heavy layers of fat around their hearts and in sheets around their stomachs.

“Mist began to rise from the river in filmy wisps. The moon was losing its hard brilliance. The leader was far out in the shallow water enjoying a last

drink before leading the way through the papyrus to the rolling, dipping flats. Bong'kwé was full nearly to bursting but got to his feet without a dissenting grunt and joined the other buffalo as they crowded through the reeds. Once up on the flats, he found that the wind had died away and that the air was warm. When the sun rose it found the herd almost where it had left it grazing in a broad dip.

"It is unfortunate, I'nkos," said Shamanyati, looking at me as if to add emphasis to his words, "that there is not grass for all the animals like the rich river grass. Then we would have fat, sweet meat all the seasons instead of just at the end of the rains." The old man sighed as if depressed at the thought of all the tough meat he had had to eat. I smiled. Shamanyati, as I well knew, would chew on even the tough hide of a hippopotamus and I had yet to hear of any piece of rank meat of an elephant being left behind as inedible. But I agreed with him that it was regrettable that we could not enjoy fat meat all the year around. Living on game meat is not the gourmet's paradise that many people think it is. The natives actually fare better in this respect than the white man, for they have no hesi-



tation in killing young calves or cows fat in the expectation of coming motherhood. I mentioned this to Shamanyati.

"That is true, I'nkos," he answered. "But the game is our only source of meat. And it belongs to us, for are we not the real owners of the veld and not you white men who have come here since I was born? Why should we not kill the animal that is fattest? We cannot tell what kind of an animal will fall into a pitfall or put its foot into a snare."

It was no use my suggesting the large herd of native cattle. They are taboo. No native of the Mashukulumbwe will kill a cattle beast excepting at a funeral feast. No matter how sick or old an animal may be, rather than kill it they allow it to fall down and die even if it be in great pain. As for looking into the future, all natives are fatalists. What will happen will happen regardless of anything man may do. No native could ever really understand the conservation of game so that his descendants might enjoy the hunting which he enjoys. They live only from day to day and as a natural result often find themselves short of grain, owing to excessive beer making or selling. But just as naturally they do not bemoan. If they have no

grain they have no grain, and they search about for something else that is edible. In many ways theirs is a good philosophy of life.

Having rebuilt the fire, Shamanyati settled down and resumed his tale.

“Clouds began to pile up during the daytime. Gusts of wind would suddenly sweep across the flats, and once or twice at night there was thunder and lightning in the sky. The rains were near. N'tongwalynyango'nyango [locust birds] appeared from nowhere. Flocks and flocks of these birds came down out of the sky and walked across the flats in rows, picking up quantities of insects and bugs. All day they walked about, looking very important in their coats of black and white and their long, colored bills. When they flew, a flock would hide the sun for a moment and cast a big shadowy blotch on the ground. Where the birds went to at night was a mystery. Bong'kwé never heard them when it was dark as he often heard the white egrets.

“N'tongwalynyango'nyango never come unless rain is close behind. And it was not long after their arrival that the clouds piled up darker than before. Thunder rolled and crashed. In the great black

masses overhead, lightning shot swiftly downward. A sharp, chilling wind moaned across the flats in hard gusts. The buffalo turned their backs and waited. They could hear the rain splashing on the ground. Nearer and nearer it came, until finally the welcome water was falling all around them. The sun had vanished, shut out by the piles of clouds. The rain sweeping across the veld hid the distant trees, and the buffalo seemed to be standing in a world of their own shut in by falling walls of water. The ground had become so hard from the months of constant sun that the rain did not penetrate. Pools of water collected in every depression. Soon these overflowed and, joining, became larger, to rush down finally into the nearest dip. Everywhere the veld ran water.

“Suddenly the sun shone through. The rain passed and the flats took on a new life. The grass shimmered, sunlight danced from the many little pools, and Bong'kwé, shaking himself, sniffed eagerly at the fresh new smell of the flats awakened after many moons of drought.

“After the first storm of rain the herd did not linger for many days on the flats. Rain fell often. The bottoms of the dips became soft and soggy and

the ground on their slopes slippery. A dry place to lie down was hard to find. Many of the old bulls drifted away and the herd dwindled in numbers.

“It was during a night following a day heavy and gray with rain that the leader took her herd back to the bush veld. Moving slowly, the buffalo passed the big pan, now much larger than when they had first visited it. After a last drink they slid down the slippery banks of the tree-filled lagoon-bed, climbed up again, and swept silently past the quiet village. Not even a dog was aware of their passing. The night was very dark and thunder rolled sullenly far away. A few drops of rain spattered down. As the leader was about to enter the first 'saka at the edge of the small flat, she snorted and stopped and then wheeling quickly broke into a gallop. The herd followed, snorting and blowing, for the horrible stench of lions had come to them on a sudden puff of wind. The buffalo raced along the edge of the thick bush, not daring to enter, for it was from there that the stench had come. There was a sudden crash and a buffalo bellowed. The herd ran on but the breeze had dropped and the smell was gone. Behind them they could still hear a buffalo bellowing frantically. The sound came muffled and indis-

tinct but it was unmistakably a bellow of fear, a call for help. The leader stood listening. Once or twice she pawed at the ground and snorted fiercely. Then, swinging about with the herd at her heels, she charged back to help the calling buffalo. Breaking small trees and trampling the bushes, the herd came stampeding down. There was no buffalo to be seen. The bellowings filled the air. The leader wheeled about. Then she located the sound. It came from a pitfall. A buffalo, in the rush to escape from the stench of lions and confused by the rain and darkness, had fallen in. Now it lay jammed, its massive horns supporting its head on either side of the pit. Blowing and bellowing, it struggled frantically. Around it the herd stamped and snorted. They came close to the edge and, smelling at the hole, wheeled away. A bull bellowed hoarsely as if challenging the digger of the pit to come out and do battle. But the man did not come, for it was I, Shamanyati, who had dug that line of pitfalls. In my hut at the village I could hear the bellowing. The sound came in under the thatch and echoed about. I got up and went out, but it would have been worse than folly to go near those pits. As I stood listening to the grunts and snorts and terrified



bellows I heard another sound. It was the singsong moan of lion. It rose in volume and came drifting to me through the blackness more deadly and threatening than a full-throated roar. In my mind I could picture what was taking place out there in the pitch darkness of the night. The buffalo, stamping around their trapped companion, were being menaced by a party of lions. So long as the herd held together the lions would not dare to attack, but so soon as they had gone they would pounce upon the buffalo in the pitfall, and if they could not kill would eat it as it lay. In the morning I hurried out as soon as there was light enough to see and found that the lions were indeed upon my buffalo. Yelling, I threatened them and they withdrew, growling and snarling. I called for help from the village, and when more men had arrived we went up to the buffalo. The mass of tracks told the story.

“The herd had stayed by the buffalo in the pit until the faint light of the rainy dawn had made it unsafe for them to stay longer. Around and around they had stamped and pawed, and around and around them had circled the three lions. I found places where a lion had approached too close and a big bull had made a rush for him. The padded

tracks had stopped abruptly and a deep impression in the soft earth showed where the big brute had bounded out of harm's way. It was as if I could see the buffalo charging distractedly and furiously angry back and forth by the pitfall. The lions moaned and snarled, slinking about in the thickets. Now and again one came forth, only to be driven back by a furious rushing monster with wickedly hooked head stuck straight out in splendid defiance.

“In another spot I found blood and the tracks of a large calf and the dragging marks left by the hind feet of a lion that had missed its spring and only managed to get half its weight onto the animal. The calf had gone to its knees and then struggled up to rush off toward the herd. A mass of larger tracks showed where the furious herd had rushed to the calf's assistance. It was not until much later, I'nkos, when I again saw the herd in daylight that I realized that the calf that had been attacked that night had been Bong'kwé. For as I saw him there were seven great whitish scars running from the top of his shoulder along and down one side. It must have been long before he recovered from those terrible wounds. Indeed, if he had not been a calf of great strength the loss of blood would have

killed him. Even when I saw him he was thin, not as one would have expected to find a calf in the middle of the rainy season. After that terrible night of pitfalls and lions the Great Herd did not come down again to the flats. The rain had brought forth an abundance of grass. The trees were in leaf and the veld was green and soft and beautiful. The leader led what remained of the herd back to their old haunts far in the bush veld, and there the buffalo gradually separated until the next dry season should bring the survivors together again."

Shamanyati stood up and looked at the bit of a moon that shone down on us. The camp was long since asleep. The big fire had burned down to a heap of glowing coals. I stretched myself and rose to stand beside my tracker. For a few minutes we warmed ourselves, and then saying "Good-night" the old man shuffled off to the village, his crippled leg dragging oddly as he went.

## CHAPTER X

“**H**ow the veld changes with the seasons, I’nkos!” Shamanyati began the following evening. “Where now all is burnt and black and bare there will soon be tiny new leaves and green grass. Flowers will bloom and the trees will put forth shoots. Gone will be this hard, dry, brutal country and in its place will grow a soft land full of running rivers. How can the white man wonder at us if we worship and pay due respect to the wind and rain and sun? If it were not for them these changes would not take place. The veld might remain as desolate and cooked as it is now. We would perish and be known no more.”

“The rain is indeed good,” I affirmed. Who was I to attempt to shake the old man’s beliefs? And the rain was good. So was the sun. Without them

there would be no grain, no tobacco, no grass, no humans or animals. Truly Shamanyati's thoughts were much as mine. Hazily in my mind I worshiped a Great God, One from whom came all things, even rain. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* . . . Yes, we were much alike—the old, wrinkled, pock-marked native and myself with tanned skin and thorn-scarred arms and legs. The veld makes all men kin, though one be master and the other servant. Too big, too strong, too hard, too wide is the veld for a man to stand alone in his beliefs. Such an existence with life itself balanced in one's hand belittles most things. Only those that are raw, essential to life, stand forth.

“It was fortunate that Bong'kwé's clawing by the lion happened when it did,” the tracker was continuing his tale. “If he had not been able to find grass easily he would have died. For the old cow had started for the bush veld far back from the land of villages and men, and the herd could not stop because one member of it was injured. So Bong'kwé limped along. Whenever he could he lay down and rested. He drank much water, for the fever was in him and his shoulder and side pained him mightily. They were terrible wounds that he had received—



long, jagged rips that would not heal because of the motion of his shoulder. Flies settled on the raw flesh and nibbled at it, causing blood to ooze. But that was good, though the smart and hurt made Bong'kwé savage. He hooked fiercely at a calf that tried to induce him to play. Once he butted a big bull who jostled him as the herd crowded down a trail amongst the trees.

“They were making a man of him, those wounds. His mother paid Bong'kwé no attention. She was guarded by a bull even heavier than herself. He resented the calf's attempts to gain some sympathy and drove him off with fierce snorts and grunts. His mother would have done nothing even if she had wanted to. So Bong'kwé learned still another law of the veld, one which means the most though it is hard for a calf to understand. That is the law which says that every creature must fend for himself, that he can expect little help from the others of his herd. Buffalo and elephants return sometimes to help a comrade in distress. But even these fearless animals do not hesitate to run if the danger is too great.

“The country had changed enormously since the herd had passed over it on their way to the flats.

Now grass was springing up even on the rises. The vleis were soft and carpeted with rich grazing. Clouds filled the sky and piled up on top of one another in great masses of billowing white and gray mountains. Shadows drifted across the veld, and the dancing heat haze had gone. Gone too was the acrid smell of fire. The bush was sweet and new.

“Bong'kwé hardly noticed the change. He was grateful for the coolness, but otherwise he dragged along with the herd, sore and angry. When the leader moved he moved. When she stopped, he stopped also and lay down. Only when the lack of food made him dizzy and weak did he graze. Grass tasted sour and unclean to his mouth. Water was what he craved, plenty of water to drink, and mud in which to wallow.

“Storms broke over the herd. Wind moaned through the trees and whipped sheets of rain across the vleis. The veld took on a gray distant softness. Palms rattled their fronds and bent gracefully before the gusts.

“Thunder rolled deep and guttural like the far-away roaring of an immense lion. Grazing along, the herd would turn tails to the wind and stand motionless while the rain poured down their sides

and streamed from their ears. The cool water felt good to Bong'kwé's throbbing shoulder. The flies left him and drops of rain washed away the irritation of those gaping holes. He would graze a little. Life seemed not quite so hard and terrifying. The call of a bird provoked sufficient interest for him to flap his ears and turn his head. But it was a very different calf from the one that had crossed the veld when the fires leaped and roared and water was scarce. Though thin he was bigger and taller. His horns were over a hand in length. As he looked about, his eyes had a truculent, speculative gleam and his whole attitude had become more like that of the heavy, lumbering bulls. Slowly he walked along, swinging his head from side to side, his ears flapping and his shoulders, massive even in his thinness, working powerfully beneath his hide.

"Now and then as the hairless cow wandered back toward the 'sakas and pans of the far bush, buffalo drifted away from the herd. At first only the old bulls went off, usually alone, but occasionally in parties of five or seven. By some particularly pleasing bit of thick bush a cow perhaps would stay behind, but there were not many so daring. So it came about that when, after the lapse of many

days and nights, Bong'kwé found himself near the old familiar double pan with the palm trees, the herd had dwindled. It consisted mainly of cows and calves and young bulls not yet powerful enough to run alone. The leader went no farther. Here she knew that the herd was safe from man. The 'sakas were many and thick and the grass around the pans was sweet and plentiful.

“Gradually the skin drew together over Bong'kwé's cuts. The stiffness went out of his shoulder and the flies no longer settled on him in buzzing clouds. It seemed as if he could not eat enough, and as he grazed his strength came back to him and his confidence returned. The old leader had disappeared. His mother too had gone. Before very long Bong'kwé found that his only companions were two other calves of about his own age and a few bulls nearing maturity. With these he wandered to and fro from one 'saka to another. In the vleis the grass grew longer and tougher. The pans of water filled up and spread out. The buffalo kept more and more to the ridges where there were trees and where the grass was short. Storms darkened the veld and the dongas ran deep with muddy water. Then for

days the sun would shine brightly and the bush was gay with twittering birds.

“One evening as Bong'kwé stood at the edge of the vlei gazing at the waving grass a horrible stench floated to his nostrils. With a terrified snort he whirled about and faced into the breeze and with distended nostrils and ears stiff he searched again for that terrible smell. Lions! His mind flashed back to that frightful night when a great shape had launched itself upon him and knocked him to his knees. He seemed to feel again the rip of claws through his flesh and to hear the savage growl the lion had uttered as he felt himself slipping off the calf. It was more than he could stand. He pawed the ground and bellowed. And then panic seized him, and wheeling he dashed away in heavy gallops. Plunging through grass and stumbling over fallen branches, Bong'kwé crashed across the veld. Not stopping to think where he was going, he ran wildly, determined only to get away from that fetid stench which for him had such terrifying memories.

“The other buffalo ran with him. They too had smelt the lion, although the smell had not been as frightening to them as to Bong'kwé. Soon their



panic passed and they slowed their pace. Bong'kwé too pulled up and then they stopped. The smell was gone and they began to graze. But Bong'kwé often raised his head and sniffed the wind suspiciously. Lions, for him at least, were very real and terrifying. Not again would he be caught and knocked off his feet. That one experience would last him all his life."

Shamanyati paused in his story-telling. For a while he squatted, staring into the fire. A wind blew through the trees. We would have rain before long. I could smell the distant wetness.

"You know, I'nkos," said Shamanyati, abruptly breaking the silence. "Animals learn much quicker than children. Perhaps it only seems that way because those that do not learn do not live. I have seen a child burn itself several times at a fire. No animal would do that. Once would be sufficient. Is that because in some way children know that we older people are here to protect them? Bong'kwé would never forget the stench of lions. Possibly you will say that he should have learned about lions from his first experience with them the night the herd was stampeded. But I do not think that animals have sufficient brains to learn only from the experi-

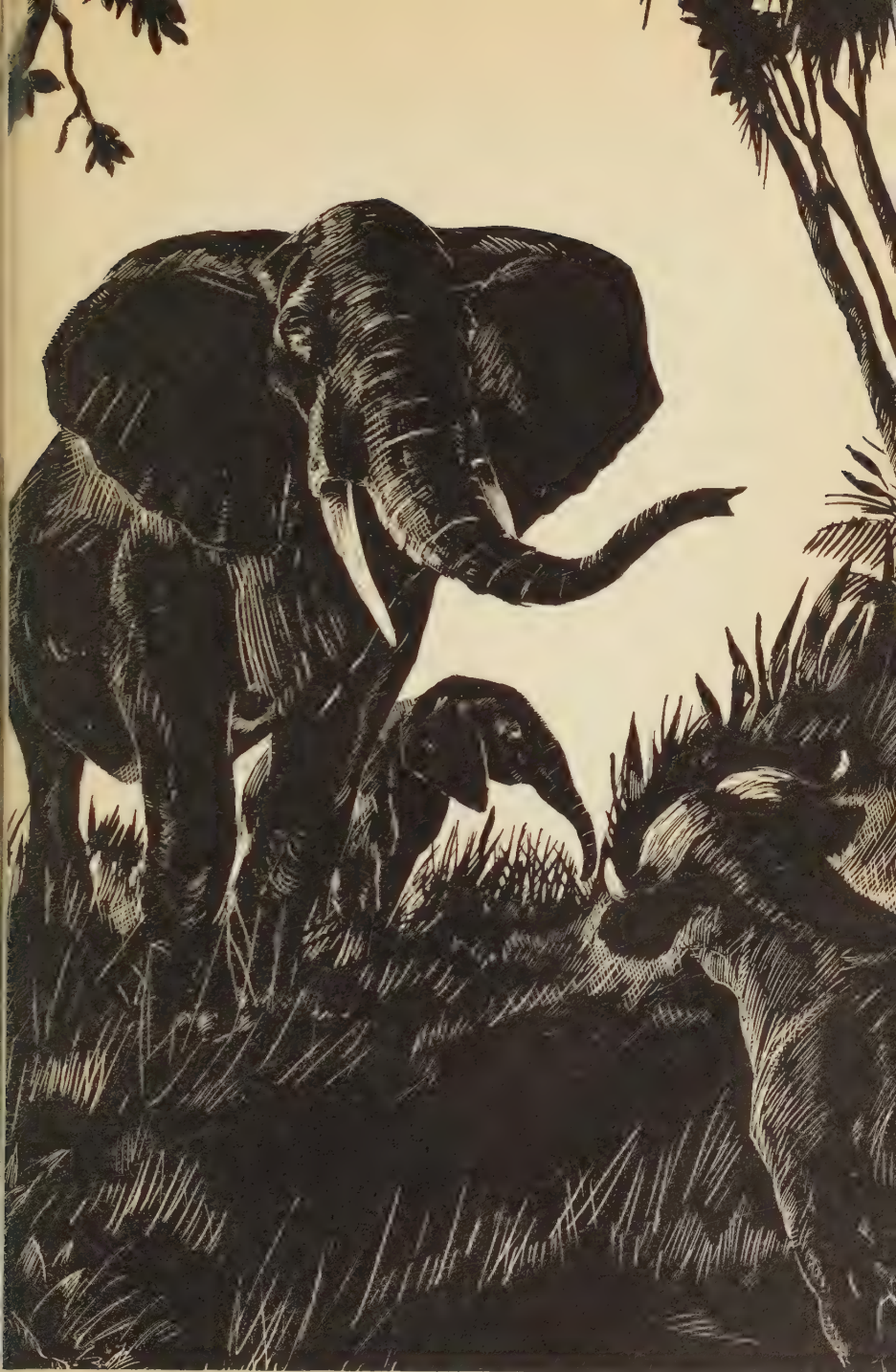
ence of another, no matter how near they may be. An adult might. I do not know. But the calf must experience to really learn."

The hunter fell silent and we sat quiet, each thinking his own thoughts. Mine were of a little zebra foal that I had once caught. It was so young that its cord was still hanging limp beneath its belly. When I gathered it in my arms it had made no struggle save to adjust itself comfortably to my arms. At camp it drank greedily from a bottle, but a coat button or a finger were eagerly accepted if the milk was not yet warmed. It knew nothing, that baby foal. All things were friendly and everything good to nurse at. But it had learned and quickly. His own boy he would unerringly pick out and follow everywhere. He knew the cook as a source of tidbits and much preferred the company of humans under the dining shelter to solitary grandeur in his own stable hut. Dogs he learned would nip, and avoided them. A big crane that was also a pet developed jealousy and pecked at the little zebra, lower than himself, with his long, hard beak. So the foal avoided him also.

Another gust of wind blew up from the wide flat beyond the trees. I got up and, going to my bed,

pulled an old coat from under my pillow. The nights can be chilly even twelve degrees from the equator. Perhaps it is because one's blood becomes so thin from the days of baking heat. Or more likely it is the fever. The old man built up the fire so that it crackled and shot up showers of sparks. A dog shifted his position from amongst the warm ashes. Behind me I could hear my horse munching stolidly at his pile of dry grass covered with a little salt.

v "The large herds of game had disappeared," Shamanyati resumed the story. "Bong'kwé in his journeyings to and fro often crossed the trails of hartebeest, of sable and eland. But he saw no more the great gatherings that had grazed in the burnt-over vleis. It was the calving season and the cows roamed alone. Once he met an old eland bull. Bong'kwé had heard him coming but had thought it was one of his companion buffalo. For a moment or two, the buffalo calf and the huge eland had examined each other. Bong'kwé stuck his head straight out and just stared, with his ears pitched forward. The bull had tossed his head and made a slow step forward. At that Bong'kwé had stepped aside. He was too small to argue with such an enormous animal.



BONG'KWE STOOD AND WATCHED.





“The grass grew longer and longer. Bong'kwé, big as he was, could not see above the tops when he waded into it to cross a vlei. The mahaubahauba fruits were beginning to turn yellow. The elephants had returned from their place amongst the hills far up the river. The veld had become again the place into which Bong'kwé had been born.

“The moon had died and been born again. Much rain had fallen with its passing. In the vleis at night the frogs sang loudly, making a noise somewhat like the clinking of pots. Ducks and geese found the veld a paradise. Whistling and piping, they wheeled about in the air or rose from water, deep-hidden by the grass, in flapping, noisy flocks. Bong'kwé saw them often feeding on the newest, tenderest shoots of grass just at the margin of the pans. But with the growth of the moon the rain ceased. The sun rose day after day and was not blotted from sight by masses of clouds. It was not yet the end of the rainy season. Just that lull, the small dry season, that comes before the heaviest rains of all. The ground dried out somewhat and the heavy smell of fast-growing and fast-rotting vegetation faded.

“Bong'kwé was standing dozing beneath a thick

bush at the side of an ant-hill. It was hot and close and he felt no urge to move. Around him the crooked fire-blackened mahaubahauba trees grew close together. A duiker was feeding on some fruit which had fallen into the short grass. Bong'kwé watched the little antelope as it stepped daintily about. Its short tail twitched continually and it raised its head often to look about. Then with a quick bound it disappeared. Bong'kwé gazed after it, then turned his head back. He stiffened and his ears flew forward. A stick had snapped sharply down the wind. Motionless, the calf stared towards the sound. An enormous animal moved slowly into view. Bong'kwé could not see all of it. There was a huge grayish black body and heavy tree-like legs that only bent far down towards their ends. It did not seem anything from which to run and as yet the monster animal was some distance away. Bong'kwé remained under his bush. Other shapes followed the first. Soon there were ten or twelve moving about amongst the trees. Bong'kwé could see that they were feeding on the fruit. Something that hung in front of them like a tapered leg would suddenly twist upward and then, descending with a cluster of fruit, thrust it into a great mouth. He

could hear the rumblings of their stomachs and see long white curving objects that apparently grew on each side of their mouths. It was a small herd of elephants feeding on the mahaubahauba fruit of which they are exceptionally fond.

“Bong'kwé stood and watched. The breeze was slight and blew from him to the elephants. They seemed to pay no heed but continued their feeding. One came nearer and Bong'kwé saw its great ears flapping, and its small eye and huge head. It raised its trunk and, wrapping it around a branch, stepped back. There was a ripping crash and half the tree came down. A creature not much larger than Bong'kwé came up quickly, and he saw it raise its little trunk and pick off some of the yellow fruit and stuff it in its mouth. Evidently it was a young one, a calf like himself. He became so interested in watching this new way of feeding that he forgot that these great animals might be dangerous.

“The cow beside the little elephant raised her trunk again. Twisting it this way and that, she scented the wind. Her great ears had stopped flapping and stood out straight on either side of her enormous head. Very forbidding and dangerous she looked, standing so high and so still. Bong'kwé

stared at her. He felt a breeze ruffle his hair and then the cow elephant screamed and made a step towards him. At that shattering sound Bong'kwé whirled about and fled. That was the scream he had heard before when the herd had fed downwind from the pan in which elephants were bathing. Those were the great beasts which left such deep traces in the soft ground of the vleis and whose passing flattened trails in the grass like those made by the passing of a whole herd of buffalo.

“But Bong'kwé did not run far. He had found out that it was not necessary. Danger did not pursue unless it were the tireless wild dogs which were on one's trail. Lions and leopards make a sudden rush. If they fail they do not follow up the animal which they have attacked. Full well they know that it will be trebly on the alert and give them no opportunity for a second attempt. So once beyond the belt of mahaubahaubas Bong'kwé slowed up and walked with his companions, searching for sweet grass with which to fill his belly.

“Thus Bong'kwé gained knowledge of the life of the veld. The moon waned and again the rains came down. With the other buffa'lo Bong'kwé roamed the rises. He grew to know the bush-pig

and the wart-hog. The small cats did not frighten him. He snorted at them contemptuously and they fled helter-skelter. He was finding himself. He was growing heavier and heavier. His coat was very dark and against it the white scars of the lion's claws stood out prominently, marking him apart from other buffalo.

“It was because of those scars and his long legs and dark coat that I recognized him when I saw him again. I was hunting and had taken up my position near the two pans. Buffalo tracks were numerous and fresh, and my thoughts had drifted back to that day on which I found the little buffalo calf lying so helpless in the 'saka. I was marveling at myself for having spared his life. But this day I was again to let that buffalo live. For later when the sun was fast sinking towards the trees a group of buffalo parted the long grass and stepped out upon the grazing ground around the two pans. There were no old ones among them and I was preparing to slip off my ant-hill, thinking that they would be comparatively easy to approach, when one of the largest animals turned sideways. Down its side from its shoulder ran seven narrow white marks. Scars. The scars of a lion's clawing attack. I looked



again. The buffalo seemed familiar. That dark coat and those long legs. Surely it was the calf that I had spared. It must be the calf the lions had attacked close to my pitfalls near the village, for the tracks had been very large for a calf. So it had survived that terrible mauling. I had not thought that it would, for there had been much blood about. The calf must indeed have been strong beyond other calves. I was interested, I'nkos, and forgot that I was hunting and sat on my ant-hill watching those buffalo until the sun had sunk so low I had barely time to return to the place where I had made a small camp. As I watched, Bong'kwé waded into the pan and fed and drank as if he were an adult. It was then that I gave him his name. As you know, it means the old man buffalo, the bull that roams alone. It suited him, for he was an independent buffalo and wise and strong beyond his age. Having eaten and drunk he waded to the shallow water and flopped down to lie in the mud. Then, getting to his feet, he rubbed his head on the ground and hooked at the mud with his spike horns. They were growing fast and peeling around the bases. The mud and water was cooling and allayed the irritation.

“I could have shot a poisoned arrow at him, but I

did not. Why? I do not know exactly. Perhaps because it was already written that he and I were to have our terrible battle when he had found his full strength and cunning. For whatever reason it was, I spared him and returned to my camp that night without meat. Only once before, when I have had such an opportunity to kill, have I desisted, and that was with Bong'kwé also. Can you explain that, my chief?—for I cannot. It was a grievous mistake that I did not kill him, for then I would not have had these,” Shamanyati touched his scars, “nor would I have been lamed and crippled as I am now.

“Before I saw the herd again the mealies in our gardens had ripened. I had been hunting all day and had been lucky in that I had planted an arrow in an eland. I was tracking it, moving along very quietly amongst the trees. At any moment I expected to see it lying down ahead of me. We had come some distance. Along the rise on which I was the grass was short. The trees, in full leaf, were tall but I could not see far ahead because of the many large ant-hills which were covered with dense masses of cactus and bush. There was a noise of breaking bushes. It came from beyond some

ant-hills. I slipped forward, creeping from one tree to another. If my eland was still on its feet it must be very sick. The arrow had struck it behind the stomach and sunk well in. The poison was a quick and powerful one. But as I crept around the side of an ant-hill it was a buffalo that stood before me and not my eland. I looked about hurriedly. There were other buffalo, perhaps twenty in all. I saw Bong'kwé off to one side and some half-grown bulls and two big cows with young calves. The herd was reforming. Then beyond the buffalo I saw my eland. It was standing under a tree, its head hanging listlessly. It had evidently met the small herd of buffalo and needing help and protection had stayed near them. Badly wounded animals quite often do that. But even as I watched it the eland lay down suddenly. I knew that it would never get up again. Near me a half-grown bull buffalo was grazing peacefully. He had not the faintest knowledge that a man was crouching on the ant-hill towards which he moved. I fitted an arrow to my bow and waited. Before long the buffalo turned sideways, and pulling the bow thong I loosed an arrow at him. It struck him on the shoulder. With a startled grunt he bucked and looked about him. I had risen when I

shot and he saw me. The other buffalo had raised their heads at his grunt and they too saw the man standing close to them on the ant-hill. A big cow stared for a moment and then the herd dashed off.

"I walked toward my eland. Its head was stretched forward on the ground. I doubt whether it saw me as I approached, for it was very near death. With a quick throw I speared it to the heart and was soon very busy cutting out the poisoned parts. The sun was sinking and I had much to do and far to go. I dragged the m'tumbo to one side. If the hyenas wished to eat them I did not care. They would be stinking by the time I could return the next day and they were full of poison. With my ax I cut down many branches and thorns and cactus and piled them over the eland and then went back to the village.

"When I returned the next day I brought many people to carry the meat. When they had started back I followed the trail of the buffalo. They had not run a great distance, and before I had followed far the tracks were less deep and then I found where one had turned away from the herd and gone by itself. I followed it, for it was the one that carried my arrow. You know, I'nkos, that a badly wounded

buffalo always turns out from the herd and goes off by itself. And it is then that it is most dangerous. For it will double back close to its tracks and stand waiting. If the hunter is not on the alert and very cautious in his tracking the wounded buffalo will charge suddenly from some patch of thick grass or from behind an ant-hill and hook and stamp him beyond all recognition as a man.

“I hurried along, for my buffalo, I knew, must be dead. No animal, however strong, could survive that poison for a whole night unless it were an elephant. And so I found it dead as I expected. And also as I expected it had tried to double back. But its strength had gone and before it could complete its turn-back it had stumbled and collapsed.

“What Bong'kwé thought of my attack I do not know. Probably I was the first man whom he had actually seen. I doubt if he connected me with the death of the young bull. Indeed it is very doubtful if he knew of that death at all. The herd had galloped away and Bong'kwé had gone with them. They had no leader then to follow. When they slowed up and one buffalo lagged behind and went away by himself, Bong'kwé could hardly have



known that it was walking off to die. But he had had one more lesson: to run from man.

“Other buffalo joined the little group of which Bong'kwé was a member. Cows with small calves behind them and occasionally a bull of parts appeared on the grazing ground and merged with the herd. Then one night when the buffalo were once again feeding and drinking and wallowing around in the double pans the old hairless cow came to them. She had a calf with her and was more truculent than ever before. But the herd followed her and began again the circle of the veld. For she was wise and knew the bush. No buffalo disputed her authority, though she could not fight, for her horns were worn away with age and digging.”

## CHAPTER XI

“**B**ONG’KWÉ had grown into an animal to be carefully reckoned with. He was as large as a small cow, and although his horns were still straight he was unmistakably a buffalo and a bull at that.

“He had lived a full round of all the seasons. He had survived the attack of a lion and seen elephants close in front of him. Wild dogs had raced before him and he had watched a companion being dragged to death in mud and water by a crocodile. He knew the tick birds and the cattle egrets for his friends, but from all the experiences through which he had lived had grown a deep suspicion and a belligerent, truculent outlook on life. Bong’kwé from a small, brown, brainless, helpless calf was rapidly maturing into a magnificent specimen of the most dreaded of the big animals of the veld. The

elephant is wiser and more powerful than the buffalo. He can smash trees with his great weight and dig up roots with his tusks. The elephant knows how to help his brother push down trees and will return and carry away a badly wounded comrade. When mortally wounded or when defending a calf, an elephant can be very terrible. He, like the buffalo, doubles back close to his tracks and lies in wait for the hunter. But unlike the buffalo a hunter can dodge or run away from an angry elephant. Once an elephant loses sight of a man he is pursuing he forgets his wrath and goes off to rejoin his herd. But a buffalo never leaves his quarry. No matter how a hunter may dodge or run a buffalo will follow. If he climbs a tree the buffalo will stay at the base and bash at the trunk with furious charges. Even your mighty rifle, I'nkos, will not stop him unless you kill him dead. The impact of your heavy bullet will stagger an elephant and cause him to shut his eyes for the fraction of time which enables you to dodge and escape. You may stagger a buffalo. You may even knock him down, and I have seen you, but unless you kill him you cannot make him close his eyes.

“Lions combine one with another to kill game

by stampeding them. And that is very clever of them, just as it is very clever of elephants to combine to push down a tree which one alone could not do. Lions rend and tear and they sometimes hunt man himself, which makes them frightful to us. But a hunter can turn them with a shot. If a man is brave enough he can even turn them with his eyes and voice alone, should he by chance meet one face to face upon a path. But a full-grown buffalo is master of the biggest lion that ever lived. Should one be so extremely foolish as to attack a single bull the buffalo would hook and smash him until he was a blob, a nothing, a skin full of holes. No, I'nkos, terrible and menacing as is a wounded lion, he is not so terrible, so vindictive, so persistent as the buffalo. Neither of the two can a hunter approach with confidence, but I would rather hunt down a wounded lion than a wounded buffalo.

“S'chempera is, of course, so stupid that he is hardly to be reckoned with the buffalo, the elephant and the lion. I have hunted them, although there are not many here. S'chempera sleeps so soundly. And he rarely wanders far from his drinking pool or his bath of fine dry sand.” Shamanyati looked

up at me with a twinkle in his eye. "Did you ever hear, I'nkos," he said, "about the man who found a dead s'chempera?"

I shook my head.

"The man was out in the veld gathering fruit," he began. "He had wandered farther than usual, for the season was late and there was not much fruit to be found. As he walked along, looking about him for trees which might still be bearing, he noticed a big grayish black object lying under a tree ahead of him. At first he thought that it was a stone. But it was not the type of veld in which one finds big rocks. The man approached and to his intense surprise saw that it was a s'chempera which lay under a tree. He was not a hunter nor had he ever seen such an animal before. But he knew what it was from the many stories he had listened to around the fires in his village. What good fortune for him to find so much meat, he thought. And the horns, too, were valuable. Never doubting but that the animal was dead, he walked up fairly close. As he stood looking at his find the thought came to him that while he was gone to fetch others to help carry home the meat someone else might find his s'chempera and claim it as his own. Drawing his ax,



he decided to cut a piece out of the hind quarters and carry it with him to prove possession. He stepped up close and swung his ax high, for he had seen pieces of the hide of the s'chempera and knew that it was very tough. Down swished the ax and bit deep into the hide and flesh. With a fearful squeal the dead s'chempera scrambled to its feet and, blowing great gusts through its nose, tore off across the veld carrying the man's chopper with it."

The old man glanced up at me to see how I had taken his story. I looked at him reproachfully. "Is that a true story?" I asked, trying not to show my laughter.

"Well, I'nkos," replied Shamanyati, "that is the way in which it was told to me."

"You old liar!" I exclaimed. "You know nobody could stand by a s'chempera and not see and hear it breathing. And what about the wind? Even when asleep a s'chempera smells and listens, too."

"I know, I'nkos," answered the old tracker. "The man must have approached up the wind and, of course, he was very, very quiet, for he was nervous."

"Doubtless he was," I muttered, and pulling out my pipe started to fill it. Shamanyati dug a

coal out of the ashes and passed it to me. For a few minutes I sat smoking and staring at the fire, waiting for the old man to begin his story again.

“As you have said, I’nkos, the s’chempera smells and listens. But he cannot see well and his charges are blind. It is very easy to dodge him, and if he does not find you s’chempera goes on, rushing over trees and making horrible noises until he forgets and settles down once more. He is not so dangerous as the other three, but he is very curious and always in a bad temper. So many ticks feed in the folds of that heavy hide of his that s’chempera is always irritated and in an ugly frame of mind. But he is not cunning. One squealing, puffing charge and his wrath is gone.

“I think that the leopard is more like the buffalo than any other animal. He is bold and dangerous, a terrible fighter, and although not clever as the lion and the elephant, an animal much to be feared. When wounded, leopards do not usually double on their tracks, but they will fight. One must kill a charging leopard or face a raging, tearing demon. They are so swift. A lion is fast. An elephant in his first screaming charge is even faster. But, with the exception of the cheetah, I do not think that any

animal can cover the ground so swiftly as an angry leopard.

“Perhaps it is because I have hunted buffalo so much that I respect them. Perhaps because one nearly killed me. I have had some exciting times with animals in the many years I hunted over the veld, but to me the buffalo is the greatest of all antagonists. He is swift and powerful, cunning and vindictive. He is wise and courageous. Once provoke a buffalo to battle and he will not turn tail until either you or he are dead.

“It was this type of animal that Bong'kwé was becoming. He had still much to learn, but in the years he ran with the herd he grew wiser and wiser. Knowledge came to him in many ways. From constant repetition he learnt some things, from experience he learnt many more. But as he roamed with the herd at the end of the rainy season he was not a dangerous animal. No wild creature is unless it is first hurt or is mad from hunger or a festering wound. To think that the lion, the elephant, the leopard, the buffalo, and even s'chempera are the natural enemies of man is a mistake which many people make. We are the enemies of the animals, for we are the ones who do the hunting and the

killing. We are the ones who set the traps, dig the pitfalls, and shoot at them with arrows and with guns. Men are the creatures who hunt with dogs and fire and nets, who spear and cut and wound. Is it wonderful, then, that a few of the big animals fight to defend themselves? Are they not surrounded constantly by dangers of all kinds? Do they not survive to grow and breed only because they do fight, because they are always on the alert to run, to out-manuever some other animal that seeks their death? It is so easy for one who knows animals' habits to kill them. With my bow drawn taut I wait for them to pass or creep upwind and loose a poisoned arrow at them. They have not seen me, they do not know from which direction death has flown amongst them. And with a rifle such as you have, I'nkos, that kills from such a great distance! Bah!" And Shamanyati spat disgustedly upon the ground. "Men? We are like the lion whom I despise. Creeping and skulking. But unlike him, for we have neither the courage nor the strength to fight an animal cheek to cheek for all our iron and powder."

I gazed at the old man in amazement. What had so suddenly provoked this killer, this famous

hunter, to such an outburst? Shamanyati must have seen my astonishment, for he looked away at the fire for a moment before he spoke again.

“Why do I talk so? Perhaps because I am old and have killed so many animals. Perhaps because I know them so well and in all my hunting it is only one animal that has really fought against me. And even though Bong'kwé so nearly killed me it was at the cost of his own life. Now that my hunting is over and I have much time to sit around my fire and think, I am not proud that I killed him. For Bong'kwé was a great buffalo and had survived many dangers and many hardships before he met me. And after all who am I that I should go about killing the creatures of the veld? They do not harm us. The lions and leopards kill my cattle and goats, occasionally the antelope and buffalo wreck a garden . . . But men must eat and meat is very good. . . .”

Eventually Shamanyati resumed the story of Bong'kwé:

“The Great Herd of buffalo slowly reformed itself after the dispersal of the rainy season when the calves were born. Bong'kwé's mother appeared with a new calf. He did not recognize her save



that her smell seemed more pleasant to him than that of other buffalo, nor did he try to attach himself to her. He ran alone, a member of the herd, but yet an individual.

“There is an enormous stretch of veld lying toward the setting sun in which there are no villages. It is the home of elephants and buffalo. Herds and herds of zebra, hartebeest, wildebeest, sable, roan, eland, and water-buck roam over it. Lions are plentiful. They can be heard roaring after the sun has come up and late in the day before it has set. Although they had such a great district over which to travel, the buffalo kept to the same general part of the veld season after season. So long as grass and water were to be found there was no need for the leader to venture into unknown country.

“Bong'kwé came to know the paths from one pan to another. He knew where were the vleis which grew the sweetest grass and where the 'sakas lay. As one moon followed another he grew more confident of his own strength and power. He lagged behind the herd when more than ordinarily hungry, and once this nearly cost him his life.

“The vlei was rich in grass. But the herd had not

yet drunk and the leader did not linger long. Feeding slowly, she led her buffalo amongst the young palms and up the rise toward the trees. Bong'kwé knew where she was going, but the grass was tempting and he lingered until the last buffalo had disappeared over the rise. Very small and lonely he looked, wandering about in the pale moonlight. The vlei was wide and long. At the upper end groups of palms grew close together. They bent toward each other in the gentle breeze as if whispering of sights their tall heads had seen many seasons before. A family of 'bush-pigs appeared from the shadows of the trees and trotted down the length of open stretch toward the marshy bottom, where they would root up the ground in great patches. A plover cried out shrilly and then was quiet. Bong'kwé raised his head and suddenly realized how entirely alone he was. Sniffing, he picked up the trail of the herd and followed it. But the grass was very good and he moved slowly, stopping to graze here and there as he went.

“A small, long-legged animal jogged into sight under the palms. Just at the edge of the moonlight it stopped. Other shapes came up and stopped beside the first. Wild dogs! A pack of forty or more.

Silently they stood scanning the vlei, their tongues rising and falling gently over their front teeth. Suddenly the leader sprang forward and dashed into the open. He had seen Bong'kwé moving amongst the young palms. One of his pack running behind gave tongue. As the high yipping bark broke the stillness of the night, Bong'kwé whirled about, saw the dogs far up the vlei, and started the heavy lumbering gallop of the frightened buffalo. The bush-pigs at the far end of the vlei scurried from their rooting and took refuge in a thick 'saka where the dogs were not likely to pursue them. But if they had known they were safe enough. It was Bong'kwé who was in danger. His hoofs sank deep into the soft sandy soil of the rise as he pounded up the slope along the trail of the herd. The wild dogs had cut across from the palms and were running close behind him. The leader had given tongue and the whole pack barked and yipped as they raced along. They could see Bong'kwé ahead of them under the trees. But he was a buffalo. The leader hesitated to close in. He had had experience with those truculent beasts before and had never yet participated in the death of one of them. Buffalo turn and fight, and when they fight they kill many wild dogs. So

the leader held back. He could easily have been alongside the laboring buffalo had he been sure it was only a calf, although a large one. Bong'kwé rushed along the trail. His breath whistled through his nose in laboring gusts. Flecks of greenish foam hung about the corners of his mouth. His shoulder muscles writhed under his hide with the intensity of his efforts. He was badly frightened. These part-colored dogs slipping so effortlessly amongst the shadows behind made his heart pound and drive. Bong'kwé never thought of turning to fight. The dogs were so many and those yelps and slaving barks so terrifying! The herd! To reach the herd was his only salvation! On he raced. It seemed as if he were getting nowhere. But the trees were thinning. A vlei opened ahead. Actually the distance was not great or the wild dogs would have found courage from the chase and closing in have pulled Bong'kwé down and torn him to pieces. But the herd had not hurried. Now as the laboring calf burst out of the trees and rushed across the open vlei the last of the buffalo were disappearing amongst the trees on the farther side. Bong'kwé saw them and found additional speed somewhere in his straining body. The dogs saw them too and pulled up. Grown buffalo

they could not face. A herd would exterminate them. Panting, the mob of dogs stood on the edge of the vlei and watched their galloping quarry disappear in the gloom opposite.

“The herd had halted when the sounds of the chase had come to them. As the high yapping came closer the leader stopped and the buffalo had closed in around her. They swung around and stood with their massive, bossed heads lowered in the direction of the vlei which they had just crossed. As Bong'kwé, galloping furiously, his breath straining in his throat, came up, the herd wheeled about and dashed away. Bong'kwé had to run some more, for he dared not lag behind. But the old cow did not run far. The momentary panic engendered by Bong'kwé's arrival died out and at the next vlei the herd slowed and returned to their grazing. Bong'kwé stood amongst them, his sides heaving from his terrified run. His heart banged inside and his throat was dry, albeit saliva and half-chewed grass hung from his open mouth.

“Indeed it is seldom that a single animal so escapes once a pack of wild dogs have taken up the chase. If Bong'kwé had not found the herd my story would be at an end. But the fact that he was



a buffalo had saved him. For the dogs had held back. Bong'kwé did not know that, and it was long before the memory of that terrible chase across the moonlit veld faded from his mind. He stayed close by the herd, and if hungry when the leader shifted contented himself with hasty crops as he moved along with the other buffalo.

“Not far from here beyond the line of 'saka where you often go hunting, T'nkos, there is a shallow pan. Now it is dry and covered with lush green grass. But when the buffalo first came down out of the far veld it held water and they often went there to drink and graze. We of the village call it the Snake Pan, for there are many of those big snakes called m'boma there. The snakes must have a village of their own in one of the big ant-hills near the pan, for I have seen young m'bomas there as well as large ones. There are many old dried skins lying about in the rough bushes where the snakes have scratched them off and the dust and sand always bear long, wavy trails.

“Bong'kwé had seen snakes—small ones that hurriedly wriggled away out of harm into the grass or slithered up trees out of danger of the cutting hoofs. They had seemed harmless enough to him.

How could a buffalo know that death lurked in those hissing mouths? One of the herd had once been bitten and for days had lagged behind. Its swollen leg had been very painful, and a hot fever had raged in its body. But it was a big bull and that powerful healthy body had slowly fought against the poison and thrown it off, although for days the buffalo had seemed mad and dazed.

“It was the season of great heat. The cow had brought her herd down close to the flats. They were ranging backward and forward behind the long 'sakas which border the land of villages and danger. Late one afternoon the herd emerged from a small patch of thickish bush and drifted down toward the Snake Pan. The great mob of buffalo was spread out, feeding on the stumps of grass that stuck up here and there like the burnt ends of brooms. Near the pan were patches of high yellow grass that had escaped the fire. When the leaping flames had passed they had been green, for the pan had been full of water. Even now, in spite of the heat, there was some remaining and the buffalo headed for it. Not to drink, for the water was too foul, but to wallow in the clinging mud. The young calves had not yet learned to pleasure

in the mud, so they wandered about the edge of the pan. Some lay down and drowsed. One, more restless perhaps, pushed into a patch of the tall grass.

“A terrified bawl cut the peace of the pan. The yellow grass waved and surged. Wallowing buffalo scrambled to their feet and plunged out of the mud. A great bull bellowed and pawed at the ground. The grass broke and a bucking, bellowing calf stumbled out onto the open. It fell to its knees and rolled. Staggering to its feet, it tried to run but could not, for around its ribs was twisted a coil of straining, squeezing snake. Investigating the grass, the calf had stepped upon a m'boma lying stretched out in the warmth that lingered amongst the close-growing roots. Instantly the huge snake had whipped its coils around the intruder and now was exerting the terrific pressure that no animal has ever broken. Bong'kwé, staring at the struggling calf, could see the tail of the snake dragging on the ground under the little buffalo's belly. The head was on the neck, biting deep with long curved teeth. Dust rose in clouds from the frantic feet. The calf tried to bellow, but its chest was squeezed so tightly that it could only gasp hoarsely and brokenly. It fell and lay kicking with its tongue

stretched out. Its eyes seemed about to pop, they bulged so in their sockets. Bong'kwé blew through his nose and bellowed. He ran back and forth. The big buffalo pawed and one old cow fell to her knees and hooked savagely at the ground.

"The air became heavy with dust and the smell of mud and buffalo, snorts and the stamp of hoofs. But the struggles of the calf grew weaker and weaker and finally ceased with a choking, gurgling gasp.

"Bong'kwé had been a fascinated, scared spectator. Now as the calf lay still where it had fallen he approached. His tail curled over his back and he walked stiff-legged with his head pushed forward. As he came close, sniffing, a long blunt-pointed scaly shape rose from the dead calf. A pinkish mouth armed with rows of back-curving, slender teeth opened wide and hissed at him. Bong'kwé recoiled and the snake struck, its head hitting the hard ground with a smack. Bong'kwé whirled away and ran to rejoin the herd, which was already gathering and moving away toward other grazing grounds.

"The great snake uncoiled itself and pulled its body from beneath the calf. It could not swallow

such a big animal. It wound its way off and left the carcass to the mercy of the eagles and vultures which were already descending from the darkening void of the sky. The sun sank and lit the veld with a last violent glow of orange. Around the pan nothing moved save the great birds stalking around the calf, not yet certain that it was dead. As the light faded a white-headed vulture picked boldly at the calf. If did not move, so the bird flapped up onto it and tore at the stiffening flesh.

“Night hid the gruesome feast. The vultures had gone to roost in near-by trees. But the cracking of bones and tearing of hide and flesh told of other scavengers at work. The jackals had gathered. The dead calf was a feast they were not often privileged to taste. But downwind the melancholy whoop of a hyena foretold the end of their feasting.

“By noon the next day nothing remained of the tragedy save the skeleton, whitened by the droppings of birds, and the skull, which had been dragged to one side and lay nose upward as if grinning at the blazing sun. The ground about was torn and scraped, but it told no story, for the tracks of the night feasters had been blotted out by the flap-



ping wings of the gorged vultures rising in heavy flight.

"The Great Herd remained in the border land. I hunted them often, for a large herd of buffalo seldom travels far in a day, and the amount of fat meat which one gets from a big buffalo is ample reward for the hardest kind of stalk.

"One morning I by chance found the buffalo still grazing in the open. They were slowly heading toward a thin strip of 'saka. Knowing that they would enter the thick bush before the sun had risen much higher, I worked my way through, and moving swiftly along the farther side entered the 'saka again opposite the feeding buffalo. I hurried, slipping under low branches and crawling rapidly along low trails. The 'saka was small, but it was very dark inside and smelt close and heavy. Near the edge I found an ant-hill. It was steep and crumbling, but I managed to climb up and see above most of the thick stuff. The buffalo were close by and feeding toward me. The old cow was in the lead, a calf following close behind her. Over a large area the veld was black with buffalo walking heavily along. A calf bawled and I slid down from the ant-

hill and ran quickly to a branchy crooked tree into which I climbed.

“A bush snapped. I could hear the click of horns. The buffalo were entering the 'saka. A dark mass showed for a moment amongst the bush, and then a buffalo appeared not far away. The stumpy horns told that it was the old leader. I could not see the calf. It must have been on the farther side of her. All around me sticks snapped with sharp, dry reports, the leaves rustled, and heavy feet plumped on the ground. The herd was pushing into the 'saka all about and below. I drew my bow taut and waited. Amongst the bush I could see dark shapes. A horn polished from much rubbing glinted in the sunlight. Bushes shook and a tree shivered from the weight of a great buffalo pushing past. Below me the brush bent and opened. A huge head with a massive boss and black, curving, widespread horns swung into my sight. The enormous body which followed swayed slightly from side to side as the great bull slowly moved along. His back was hairless and the hide on his sides was whitish from much rubbing against trees. My spear was beside me. I drew the bow thong tighter. It was a mighty buffalo and I would need to drive my arrow deep



THE WILD DOGS WERE RUNNING CLOSE BEHIND HIM.



to kill him. Slowly he came along and, as if the gods were hunting with me that morning, stopped beneath me to rub against my tree. Before he could smell my traces on the trunk I shot my arrow, and forgetting my bow in the excitement, seized my spear and drove it home also before the startled bull had gathered his wits and plunged with a bellow into the thicker bush beyond.

“My tree shook and my bow fell to the ground. Around me the 'saka seemed suddenly to burst into life. Grunts and bawls and snorts arose. Branches broke abruptly and a small tree snapped as some huge buffalo ran over it. Leaves swirled, hoofs pounded on the earth, and then the herd was gone. I could hear the crashing farther and farther away.

“I descended, and finding that my bow was unharmed, picked it up and went out into the open to wait. It would have been folly to follow that big bull at once. My spear had hit him high up and far back. It had sunk deep, for it was very sharp. I knew that the shaft would be smashed, but the iron would remain inside and cut and work as the buffalo ran.

“When the sun was high, almost overhead, I entered the 'saka again, and going to the tree from



which I had shot, took up the trail of the bull. It was not hard to follow, for he had been somewhat behind the others. There were drops of blood on the leaves and every once in a while a bush that had scraped against the buffalo's side showed leaves spattered and streaked with blood.

"The buffalo had run hard at first. He had caught up with the herd and run with them for some distance. The tracking was slow and difficult. I had to go warily, for the 'saka was small and that wounded bull might not have left it. He might be waiting for me behind an ant-hill. Every few steps I squatted down and stared under the bush. There were no leaves and I could see clearly. Seeing nothing that resembled the legs or belly of a buffalo, I would go on a few paces to stop and peer again.

"But the bull had not stayed in the 'saka. Coming out on the trail of the herd, I found dark dried splotches of blood that showed he had gone on. Not far away was another 'saka. The tracks led into it and I followed cautiously. Before I had gone far the blood ceased. I cast about, and after much searching found that my bull had turned out from the herd and gone off by himself. Slowly I worked along. Never was I far from a tree or an ant-hill.

Crawling under branches and putting each foot down carefully, I crept along as silent as a lion. I stared and looked. I tested the wind with dust. Often I stopped and listened for any sound that might betray the whereabouts of my buffalo. But I heard nothing and went on again. Beside an ant-hill I found deep footprints and a pool of blood which had dried and now shone dully. The bull had stood there. But he had gone on and I followed. Again I found a place where he had stood. He was sorely wounded. And then the tracks bent away and led deeper into the 'saka. They led back toward the place where he had entered, and I knew that he was close.

“A bird twittered ahead of me. I stopped. The sound had struck as loud as a shot from a gun. I squatted near a tree and stared ahead. There was a dark mass not far away. But it had no shape. I stared longer and the mass seemed to move. But so does a stump if one looks at it long enough. I turned my eyes and shut them for a moment. When I looked again the dark blob among the branches and mass of vines and bush was still there. Very quietly I rose to my feet. The tree beside me was easy to climb. I coughed and broke a stick. In-

stantly there was a rush and with a savage grunt the huge bull charged. I climbed. Smash! The buffalo crashed into the tree, nearly shaking me down. Another smash. But the poison was working and the bull was weak from bleeding. He tottered and swayed. I would have loosed another arrow, but I saw it was not necessary. A sighing grunt and the buffalo sank to its knees, only to exert itself tremendously and rise again, to sway away into the 'saka. I let it go and stayed in my tree, listening. The charge had taken all its last remaining strength. I heard it go a little ways and then there was a crash. The bull had fallen.

“I waited a while longer, and then climbing down approached the bull. He lay with his front feet doubled under him, dead. Quickly I cut out the arrowhead and a piece of meat all around and then hurried to the village for help in carrying in the meat. The sun was still fairly high and there was time to get the meat in before the light had gone.

“What Bong'kwé thought about my attack I do not know. I did not see him but he was in the herd. When the big bull bellowed and ran, the herd ran also and Bong'kwé with them. They only knew that a buffalo had suddenly bellowed in fear and

rage. But that was sufficient. Off they tore. A wild animal does not stay to look when such a warning bursts from nowhere. A silly hartebeest will sometimes return to look at a fallen comrade if the hunter does not show himself. But they are the only animals which are so foolish.

"Thus the life of the Great Herd went on. The old leader led the buffalo out onto the flats when the bush veld had dried up and there was little grass. Hunters from the village shot at them with guns and chased them with dogs. I took toll of several with my bow and pits. But while the herd was so large that we made no impression on its numbers, we put the fear of man in their minds. Bong'kwé came to dread the smell of a village. He blew through his nose and pawed at the ground whenever the herd chanced upon the trail of a man.

"When the rains came down and n'tongwalynyango'nyango [locust birds] hunted the flats for grasshoppers and other insects the herd went back to the far bush. Lions stalked them, and their sickening stench terrified Bong'kwé. Wild dogs chased across the veld in the half-moonlight. Hyenas laughed madly over some disgusting find and jackals yipped a high accompaniment.

“Strong winds blew and storms raged, bending the palms and making the trees crack and cry in protest. The pans filled up and the grass grew again. The herd broke up and the cows and old bulls separated to run by themselves. Bong'kwé again spent the rainy season in company with other young bulls. He found calves a season younger than himself running with him. He was growing up. His horns had begun to take on a downward swoop. They were thicker and at their bases there was the beginning of a boss.

“So Bong'kwé grew up, becoming with every season more wise, more cunning, and more truculent. An animal's life on the veld is hard and filled with danger. Is it any wonder that Bong'kwé grew to examine everything suspiciously, to look on life as a battle? If he had not he would not have survived.

“Toward the middle of the next dry season after the fires had smoked the veld and grass was scanty and harsh, Bong'kwé was attracted to a young cow. She was a season older than he and very comely for a buffalo. Her coat was a rich dark brown and her horns slender and evenly curved. The boss on her head was light, not heavy and full of the bark



of trees as were those of the old cows and bulls. Bong'kwé wanted her for his own, and when he first approached and sniffed the young cow seemed to be friendly toward him. For several days the two grazed and wandered together. Then an old bull heavier far than Bong'kwé disputed his possession. Bong'kwé tried to fight, but he had not the width of horn nor the strength of neck and limbs of his rival. They came together in a smashing rush. Bong'kwé was nearly hurled off his feet. He was severely bruised and shaken. He returned to the charge, only to be hooked and butted until forced to give up and walk away.

“It was a hard lesson but it taught Bong'kwé to have respect for the monster bulls who came and went amongst the herd. He had been growing so fast and was so much larger than the companion buffalo of his age that he was over-confident. His defeat taught him that he was not yet an adult, not yet fit to pass on his own size and strength.

“This is one of the great laws of the veld, I'nkos. Only the strongest and most powerful shall breed. And that is right. For only in this way would strong calves be born—calves with sufficient strength to survive the storms and dangers of the

veld. It is no life for weaklings. There are no parents to nurse sick calves, no huts to shelter them from wind and rain and cold. A broken leg, a bad wrench means death. Wild dogs will pull a hurt animal down in no time even if it be a buffalo. A crippled beast inspires courage of a sort in even the skulking hyena. Then there are always the ferocious killers, the lions, the leopards, and the cheetahs.

“Although I hunted buffalo much that season I caught only one glimpse of Bong'kwé. The herd of buffalo was large and it was difficult among the trees and brush of the 'sakas to pick out any one animal. But I did see him early one morning just before he disappeared into the shelter of a 'saka. The claw marks on his side stood out sharp against his hair. There was no doubt that it was Bong'kwé. But he limped. I watched him and as he crossed a burnt patch saw that there was a raw ring around a front foot. It was the burn that a rope makes when drawn tight and rubbed across the flesh. Bong'kwé must have put his foot into a snare.

“It was easy to picture what had occurred. We fashion rope from the bark of the gussi trees. Rolling it on our thighs we twist it hard and strong. Out on the veld we look for a trail which passes

beneath a high tree and there hide the noose about a hole. I have never caught a buffalo in this manner, but kudu and other smaller animals sometimes put their foot inside and push down on the little stick stretched across the hole. Once this is broken a light rope flies up and a heavy log suspended in the tree drops with a crash and yanks the caught antelope's leg high in the air. Bong'kwé must have stepped into such a snare. They are very hard to see or smell. The bark rope soon loses all trace of humans and the small hole in the trail is neither deep enough nor large enough to give warning of danger as would a pitfall. The log fell with a crash. Bong'kwé jumped, but not quickly enough. His leg was seized in a tight grip and yanked from under him. Struggling and bellowing, he found himself held by something that alternately tugged and gave as he struggled. But the rope had not been fashioned to hold a buffalo. Pulling and fighting, Bong'kwé had eventually broken it, but not until his foot was raw and bleeding and the trees and bushes all about had been barked and smashed with his struggles.

“This made him more suspicious than ever. It seemed as if no place were safe. Even old trails

upon which still lay the scent of a passing antelope might hold an unseen danger to leap at him and try to hold him fast.

“So Bong'kwé passed his youth and grew into a magnificent bull with a wide sweep of curving horns. His neck became thick and powerful. His back was straight and broad and his hair had turned black. The old cow who had led the Great Herd for so many seasons did not return to the double pans at the end of one rainy season. Another cow, hairless and old, took up the lead. Her horns were not so worn away as the leader Bong'kwé had known when as a calf he joined the herd, but she was wise and led the herd safely through many dangers. Bong'kwé obeyed her. Although he was full-grown and had won several cows he had not yet left the herd to roam in company with a few big bulls like himself. That lonely, fighting life was yet before him. As it was he was one of many, outstanding because of his size and scars, but still a member of the Great Herd, Shamanyati's herd.”

The old tracker fell silent. It was late and the breeze was cold and carried mist. Overhead the stars shone hard and bright, twinkling through the gently waving branches of the bare trees. For some

minutes Shamanyati did not move. Staring into the fallen fire, he squatted silently before me. I moved restlessly and he looked up. Drawing his skin cape about him he stood up.

“To-morrow night, I’nkos, I will come again,” he said. “The story draws to a close. Good-night, my chief.”

The old man shuffled away into the darkness and left me staring into the fire, dreaming of the life of the veld.



## CHAPTER XII

**T**HE day had been one of terrific heat, such heat as only comes just before the breaking of the rains. I had been out on the veld hunting since daylight, but with little success. A bath and change made life less trying, but there was a depressing nervousness in the air which it was difficult to shake off. The rains were imminent. Thunder rolled at night, sounding far up and distant. Flashes of pale heat lightning occasionally flickered about the horizon. Storms were brewing. The veld lay close and quiet, shrinking itself as if taking cover from the baking of the sun and the smashing impact of the torrential rains that were soon to fall.

My big fire burned highly in the gloom of the evening. Its heat was unnecessary, but the cheerfulness it spread about it relieved the deadness of

the camp. The natives were exhausted and lay about their cooking pot listlessly waiting for the water to boil so that they might cook their meal of stiff mealie porridge. The dogs lay about the table. Their flanks rose and fell heavily. They slept with their mouths open, uninterested in any scraps which I might throw them.

I finished my supper, and pouring a last cup of tea sat watching the stars, waiting for Shamanyati. Overhead the branches were steady. Not a breath of wind came from the flats beyond. Only directly over the fire the branches moved and waved in the rising heat. A few sparks drifted upward to die suddenly, squashed by the night.

A path led from camp toward the village. In the starlight it lay faint and gray, disappearing in the darkness as if washed out by a gigantic brush. As I looked along it Shamanyati materialized from the gloom and came shuffling toward me. His cape hung from one shoulder. His catskin loin cloth swung to and fro, the long tail dangling queerly. Squatting before me he clapped hands and waited for my greeting.

"*Da'bonwa*, Shamanyati," I greeted him.

"*Da'bonwa*, I'nkos," replied the old man. "The

veld has been hot to-day," he continued. "You were successful?"

"Not very," I answered. "I did not work hard. I was not greatly interested. As you say, it has been very hot."

I loaded my pipe, and when it was drawing nicely settled back in my deck chair to listen to the tale of Bong'kwé. The cook finished clearing the table and went off to clean up in the kitchen. Shamanyati helped himself to a pile of snuff and after sneezing violently began his story where he had left off the night before.

"When the new leader appeared with the herd, Bong'kwé had lived some five complete seasons. He was very big. His horns curved down and then up in a sweep. They were as yet light for a bull and sharp like heavy cow horns. His boss was thickening. Before many more seasons had passed it would grow wide and wrinkled and the bases of the horns would come together, making a solid mass of horn across his head. The scars on his shoulder and side had narrowed. Hair grew across them in spots but they still marked him apart from the other buffalo. Even if Bong'kwé had not carried those seven long white scars a man who knew buffalo would distin-

guish him at once among the herd. His legs were longer than those of most buffalo and his coat was very black for a bull of his age. Although still running with the herd he stood as high as any of the monster single bulls who occasionally joined the herd for a few days.

“The time came when Bong'kwé separated from the Great Herd and went off to run by himself. For a long time I was not aware that he had gone. It is difficult in the 'sakas to mark a particular animal. It was with surprise that I listened one evening in the village to another hunter's story of a single bull buffalo carrying seven white scars on its shoulder.

“It was the hot season. Maruti, the other hunter, was waiting by a pan half a day's travel from here. It is a pan seldom visited, for the country round about it is dry and desolate. Few animals drink there and it is a long carry from there to the village. Maruti was sitting on an ant-hill under the shade of a big cactus tree. There was little water. The pan is very flat. One end was covered with a level stretch of grass. At the other the water lay in the middle of a muddy wallow. It was near the center of the open ground, too far for a good shot. Maruti was hoping for some animal to pass by him along

the trails that led around the base of his ant-hill. There were a few eland and zebra about, and in the bush Maruti had crossed the tracks of a buffalo and a small herd of sable.

“The sun was reaching its height. Heat waves wriggled over the pan. The mud in the wallow had dried and caked on top. The water lay smooth and muddy-looking. Not the smallest breeze ruffled its surface. Maruti was nearly asleep. He lay on his ant-hill watching the pan through half-closed eyes. His gun lay beside where he could reach it without showing himself.

“A wart-hog came into view. Its tail rose straight and it held its head high as it trotted down the middle of the grassy stretch. Without hesitation it went to the water, drank, and then flopped down in the mud. It was an old boar with white side whiskers and curving tusks that nearly met above its snout. Maruti was tempted to try a shot. But the wart-hog was far and there might be larger animals close by. His bath finished, the pig stood up and after looking about trotted away, his sides gleaming with wet mud and water. Soon after the boar's departure a family of wart-hogs came into





A VULTURE SAILED DOWN FROM THE SKY AND LIT ON THE GRASS.



sight on the sandy spots among the ant-hills on the side of the pan opposite Maruti. They did not approach so quickly as the boar. For some time they roamed about along the edge. The three little ones raced about while their elders rooted half-heartedly among some dry grass roots and studied the pan. Deciding that it was safe, the boar led the way toward the water. Soon the old ones were drinking and wallowing. The little wart-hogs hung about the edge of the mud. They were still nursing and not interested in water. One of them flopped down and stretched out on the half-dry mud as if it had decided suddenly to imitate its mother. But not for long. Mud was not yet an essential to its comfort.

“The pan was very open and for that reason safe. Animals do not like to remain far from concealment for long. No lion or leopard could have approached the wart-hogs unseen. But from the mud to the trees was a long run and they had babies with them. The mother dragged herself from the cooling mud and, rooting a bit here and there, made her way across the grass. The little ones and her mate followed. At the edge they lingered. The youngsters scampered back and forth, chasing

each other as dogs do sometimes. The big wart-hogs rooted and rolled in the sand. Then they disappeared.

“Maruti was disappointed. Wart-hog meat is tender and white. He was thinking of moving from the ant-hill to another on the opposite side. He is not a great hunter, I'nkos. Probably he had not chosen his place well. But the sun was very hot and it was cool where he was lying, so Maruti remained watching. Then opposite, where the wart-hogs had gone, he saw a black shape move amongst the trees. He lay quiet, watching. It was a big animal of some kind. He could see that it had stopped. Evidently it was examining the pan. Then it moved and Maruti lost sight of it behind the ant-hills. The animal, whatever it was, remained hidden for so long that Maruti began to wonder if it had not become frightened in some way and gone off. Should he cross and try to track it down? He had almost made up his mind to go over and hunt the animal he had seen, when it stepped out on the sandy patch where the little wart-hogs had played. Then it walked straight out onto the short grass. It was a big bull buffalo. As it came along swinging its great horned head from

side to side Maruti said it looked as if it were afraid of nothing. Undoubtedly, I'nkos, that buffalo had stood for long behind some trees or an ant-hill, watching the pan. Maybe it had seen the wart-hogs drink and wallow. In any case the bull was certain that there were no enemies about. It reached the mud and, wading through it, lowered its broad muzzle to the water and drank long in noisy sucks.

“Maruti grasped his gun. But the water was a long distance away. Perhaps the bull would come nearer. He held his gun in readiness and waited. The buffalo finished his drink and stood gazing about him. Then he swung about and Maruti saw seven white marks running from his shoulder down over his ribs. It was Bong'kwé, although the man did not know that. To him it was only a big bull buffalo, one that had sometime had a fight with a lion.

“Bong'kwé lay down with a splash in the mud. Then he got up and hooked at the grass and turf, throwing clods into the air. Maruti was ready to shoot. It looked as if the bull were about to leave the pan. But the buffalo seemed unafraid and began to graze. Slowly it came around the wallow in Maruti's direction. A vulture sailed down from the sky



and lit on the grass close in front of the big buffalo. It turned its head on one side and stared at the big animal. Bong'kwé stared back, and then taking a step forward hooked at the bird. The vulture hopped away and Bong'kwé followed, hooking at it. It was almost as if the bird were trying to lead the buffalo within shooting distance of the man hidden on the ant-hill. Slowly the two came closer and closer to Maruti, the bird hopping over the grass and the huge buffalo following with its head lowered to the ground as if about to charge. The two came between Maruti and the water. He raised his gun and, aiming at Bong'kwé's shoulder, fired. The buffalo doubled its back, gave a great grunt of surprise and pain, then dashed in a lumbering gallop for the safety of the trees. The vulture disappeared into the sky. Maruti left the ant-hill and examined the tracks. There was blood. Some drops lay between the deep tracks where Bong'kwé had rushed across the pan.

“At the farther side Maruti stopped. He reloaded his gun, pushing the piece of broken iron pot leg down hard. He had not real bullets. This gun was not like yours. We are not allowed to have rifles into which are put cartridges. Ours we have to load

each time with powder and a bullet. Before the gun will shoot we must put a cap on the firing nipple. It takes time. We cannot shoot fast many times as you can, I'nkos.

“So Maruti waited by the pan for some time. Then he picked up Bong'kwé's trail and started after him. There was not much blood. The tracks led under the trees and across the veld, leading toward a big 'saka which lay between the pan and the village. Maruti followed, but even he could see that the buffalo was not wounded badly. The tracks were deep and even. The bull had not stopped but had run hard for a long distance, only slowing to a walk when the 'saka came into sight ahead. Maruti did not follow Bong'kwé inside the thick stuff. He had heard many stories of the cunning of the buffalo. He knew that he did not have sufficient knowledge of hunting to follow a wounded bull into a 'saka. Wisely he left Bong'kwé alone. Many men had been killed by buffalo, men who knew no more than Maruti, but who were not afraid or were lacking in sense.

“Did Bong'kwé circle around in the 'saka and stand waiting? I do not know, I'nkos. It was the first time that he had been shot. He was probably

very frightened. The wound, though it did not kill him, must have been very painful. When I killed him the men who took his hide off say that they found a pot leg lying under the skin above the rib. There was a mass of bluish meat around the iron as if the wound had festered into a boil before it had healed. That usually happens to animals that have been shot. It is these old festers which make the single bulls so vicious and dangerous to hunt. A hunter can never know whether the buffalo that he is approaching has been shot at before or not. If it has and the wound is full of pus and maggots, the buffalo will be mad and will fight. Sometimes such bulls charge without warning. They are so sore and hurt and frightened that they do not stop to think.

“It is a lonely life that these single bulls live. Perhaps you can explain, I'nkos, why it is that bull animals leave the herds and run by themselves at a period in their lives when they are reaching their maximum strength and size. To me it is not clear. True, these bulls return to the herd occasionally and, after driving away some younger bull, take a cow. Yet I do not believe they are the main breeders as one would expect. Neither are they driven out of

the herd, for surely such monstrous animals would not easily be beaten in a fight."

Shamanyati ceased speaking and reached for his snuff gourd. From afar on the bare flats came the shrill yapping of a jackal. I pondered Shamanyati's question. I had remarked this fact before and wondered at it myself. The law of the survival of the fittest is so rigorous upon the veld that it seems odd that the most perfect male specimens of a species should run alone rather than with the herd. Casual thought would lead one to expect to find the herd bulls mature and old, and the single ones youngsters not yet sufficiently heavy and skillful to successfully defend a cow of their choice. The reverse is true. Possibly the dangers attendant upon an independent life are so great that only the most wise and experienced animals can survive alone. I looked toward my old teacher.

"Why is it, Shamanyati," I queried—"Why is it that bulls of only certain types of animals separate from the herds? It is very, very seldom that I see a zebra running alone. Indeed I doubt if I ever have seen one entirely unaccompanied. It may be the only zebra in a herd of wildebeest or hartebeest, but I cannot remember having ever

found a zebra entirely by itself. Eland, sable, roan, wildebeest, hartebeest, even puku I have often found solitary. And, of course, the elephant, s'chempera, and the hippopotamus often stay by themselves for years. But zebras, no. Neither can I recollect a single lechwe."

"I do not know, I'nkos," the old man answered. "That is, like many other happenings of the veld, a mystery. Much there is that a hunter can ponder and explain but there are many, many things for which I can think of no explanation. Grass, water, fire, mud, and drought are obvious reasons by which to explain many actions, but who can know what it is that goes on inside the skull of a buffalo—an elephant—or a zebra?"

We fell silent again and stared at the fire. Neither of us spoke for so long that I finished my pipe and started again with a fresh loading. Then abruptly Shamanyati resumed his story.

"Bong'kwé once fell into a pitfall. I say that it was Bong'kwé who fell in because I saw him once amongst the open trees near a 'saka and his sides and legs were rubbed raw and free from hair. A few days before I saw him, a big buffalo had dropped into one of my pits and completely wrecked it in



getting out again. How it was that a wise old bull, such as Bong'kwé had become, could have fallen into a pitfall I know not. Perhaps he was running from some danger. Or mayhap he was sleeping as he walked. It is seldom that a single animal falls into a pit. They are usually far too alert and suspicious to be deceived.

“When I found the pit one morning it was a shallow hole in the soft sandy soil. The steep walls were broken down. One end was cut and grooved. Sand and dirt had flowed into the bottom and been churned and stamped. Buffalo tracks led up to the pitfall and then away from it. They were broad and had sunk deep: the tracks of a big bull.

“It was easy to read what had taken place. Bong'kwé had suddenly felt the ground give way beneath him. He had tried to jump but it was too late and he lit with a crash in the long, narrow, squeezing grasp of the pitfall. Probably he bellowed fiercely at first, but soon he fell silent, struggling to extricate himself.

“Bellowing might have brought other buffalo, but the call of help and terror might also have brought lions. They are quick to recognize the call of an animal which is in trouble. Stamping and

working his feet, hooking at the banks with his horns, Bong'kwé slowly broke down the walls that held him. It was a pitfall which I had dug to capture antelope. The soil was soft and full of sand. Bong'kwé smashed and tore at it, and as it sifted down into the hole stamped upon it with his hoofs and slowly raised himself so that eventually he climbed out and stood breathing noisily upon the veld once more. The tracks showed that he had walked away. Indeed he must have been tired and exhausted. To be held as an animal is held in a pitfall must be a terrifying experience. To have the seemingly solid veld suddenly give way and to find yourself gripped in a squeezing hole to which apparently there is no bottom would terrify the bravest. And then the frantic struggles and work to get out—silently and hysterically wriggling, wiggling, hooking, arching the back, pushing with the nose, exerting every muscle to get away from that silent, unyielding grip. No wonder that Bong'kwé had no strength to run when he finally dug himself out. I am pleased that he did get out. It is a disgraceful death to be speared stuck in a hole. A buffalo deserves a better death than that!

“Bong'kwé lived and fought through several

seasons as a single bull. At times he joined the Great Herd and wandered with them for a while. He fought the younger bulls, charging at them with savage, blowing grunts. He won himself cows. These in due time produced calves of which one or two had some of the magnificent qualities of Bong'kwé.

“In company with another huge bull Bong'kwé visited the open flats. The Great Herd had come out of the far veld and were lingering in the border land. The two bulls were confident and impatient. One night they left the herd and, crossing the 'sakas, made their way down the trails past the village and out onto the grazing of the flats. The ground was squashy. The two kept to the higher ground and wandered toward the river. The moon was at the half. The night was cold and hard. The marshy odor of the flats had a cutting quality which tingled in the nostrils. Mist smoked up from the river, drifting from the surface of the water in puffy wisps to settle in a blanket above the banks. There was no wind and the bulls grazed along in the uncertain light, contentedly filling their bellies without a thought of danger. Suddenly, near them, a great head was thrust up from the water. *Pooh-o-o-o*.

A blasting sigh burst upon the night. Two puffs of water rose in the air, and then the head lay floating quietly, its pinkish ears twitching rapidly to rid themselves of water. Bong'kwé and his companion swung sharply about at the sudden break in the peacefulness of the night. They stared at the shape in the water and pawed nervously at the ground. The hippopotamus was in the water, so they did not run but stood staring, two monstrous, motionless shapes looming uncertainly in the half-light upon the bank. The n'vu honked and then suddenly disappeared under the water, going down as if pulled hard by the tail. The buffalo watched the widening ripples and then resumed their grazing.

“Later in the season when the old cow brought the Great Herd down to the flats Bong'kwé went with them and stayed until the rains came down. The herds are huge at this season. It seems as if all the buffalo in the world were gathered together upon the flats. Yet if a man hunts the dry leafless 'sakas he will find many old bulls hidden there also—bulls whose horns are almost completely worn away and whose hides are gray and without hair. They are timid, these old bulls. They are the ones

whose end is near, who are too old to fight successfully. The lion buffalo we call them because sooner or later they must die and it is usually lions who kill. When the herd left the flats to return to the safety of the far veld Bong'kwé left them. The country bordering the flats is rich and tempting. He roamed up and down it from one 'saka to another but always stayed within a certain general area. Animals are like that. Although free to come and go where they please they stay about a particular water hole or travel along old paths as do the elephants. It is as though a certain part of the veld is home. It is home though to us men it may seem wild and dangerous. Bong'kwé knew where each 'saka lay. He knew where the pitfalls were and the rubbing trees. Lions often slept in a dry sandy thicket in the direction of the rising sun. He knew this and avoided the place. Sometimes I would not find traces of him for two or three moons. He had gone to some other part of the veld. Then one day I would find the fresh tracks of a big bull striking across a vlel or entering a lusaka. Bong'kwé had returned.

“There is much fruit to be found in this border country. During the little dry season the ma-



haubahaubas ripen and other roots and fruits can be dug up or picked. Parties of young and old go out onto the veld. They build temporary grass huts and live on the open veld for days, gathering the fruits and drying them. It is easier when they live among the trees. Also they can carry back so much more food if it is dry and light than if it were full of juice and water.

“Bong'kwé must have seen many of these camps. Indeed, I'nkos, I heard a story of how some of the dogs, which always go along on such trips, had chased a bull buffalo and fought with it in a 'saka not far from a fruit-drying camp. The people were old men and women and had not followed up the dogs. When they returned, two were missing. The following day the men visited the spot where the fight had occurred. The ground near a big tree was torn to sand by the hoofs of a buffalo. Broad splay tracks were imprinted deep in the soil. Bushes had been smashed. Behind one they found the skin and bones of a dog. It was trampled flat. The other hung in a tree head downwards, its entrails falling from a hole torn through its belly and chest. That bull had wreaked his vengeance and after driving off the dogs had stamped upon one which he had

killed until his rage had cooled and sense returned. I do not know for fact that it was Bong'kwé who was attacked and who killed the dogs. It happened in his territory. If it was not he that time, similar experiences must have come to him. All animals are curious and like to watch men if they can do so in safety. Lions spend many nights gazing on camps and villages from the bushes atop ant-hills. If they believe that man has not seen them, antelope almost always stand and watch him approach or pass by.

“Bong'kwé watched men many times. As the seasons passed and he learned more and more he came to know that man was always dangerous. Lions kill only when hungry. The python strikes at big animals in self-defense. Even wild dogs will pass antelope if they have been fortunate in their hunting and have their bellies full. Man is like the crocodile. Both kill at every opportunity. Both come unseen. Man kills from a distance and with hidden contrivances. The crocodile swims under water, leaving no smell nor making any sound. Bong'kwé learnt this. He came to know that although a camp might seem asleep there were always dogs to wake. That a man crossing the veld along a

path had dogs who might smell him or draw attention to the fresh spoor he had left behind. Then the chase might begin, the man coming after him with his arrows or his gun that can kill from far away and with dogs who render hiding impossible—dogs than can pick up a trail where no man's eyes could see it.

“Bong'kwé's horns spread nearly as wide as my arms when I stretch. His boss was gnarled and covered with the gum and sap from the trees against which he had rubbed. Under their heavy lids his eyes looked out suspicious and truculent. He had grown into the typical aggressive single bull: huge and lonely; depending for his life on his constant vigilance and his knowledge of how to avoid the traps we laid for him and his knowledge of when to flee and when to fight. Lions he knew well. They did not stampede him now as they used to. He was too huge, too powerful for them to care to tackle him. Zebras were common and far easier to kill.

“Think, I'nkos, a monstrous animal living alone, fighting alone. Do you wonder that he fought back when I went after him? I have heard you talk with other men and tell about the ferocity, the

vindictiveness of the buffalo. But, I'nkos, did you ever think that it is such as you and I who provoke the ferocity? If I had left Bong'kwé alone he would never have crippled me. He did not hate me before I wounded him save as he hated and feared all men. It is men like us, hunters, who make the big animals dangerous to men. We wound them, hurt them, pitfall them, put dogs after them, even start fires to drive them from their hiding places. In the end when we have finally driven them to the point of desperation in fear and anger, we call them ferocious, dangerous, because they fight to save their lives.

“They *are* dangerous when cornered or wounded. We hunt them because they are. It makes us feel strong and kingly to have slain a beast like a buffalo or an elephant. When I recovered from the wounds which Bong'kwé gave me I was proud that I had killed him. Now I feel sad. Bong'kwé has gone. We knew each other. Not as friends nor even as friendly enemies. But now that he is dead there is a presence missing from the veld, a personality which I looked for and know has gone. I am sad, not proud. For it was not necessary that I should have killed him.”

## CHAPTER XIII

**S**HAMANYATI was silent for a long time. The fire had collapsed to a flat mound of coals. Far away thunder growled and boomed sullenly as if prophesying concerning its wrath to come. The air lay about us heavy and moist. Tiny beads of sweat clustered on the end of my nose. The natives smelt. It was the end of the dry season. When once the rains had come the land would be new and sweet. Now it was deadly and stinking, like some evil thing of immense strength lying in wait to kill.

All around my camp, save on one side, stretched the flats. They lay vague yet black. Not a sound arose. No plover cried nor jackal barked. Silent and dead they lay, although countless zebra, buffalo, puku, reed-buck, and smaller animals were



busily feeding over dips and rises or drinking at the lagoons.

I looked at my tracker. He, too, was gazing out over the flats. Natives react keenly to storms and silences, to space and the power of the elements. What was he thinking, this old buffalo killer of mine? Were his thoughts drifting as mine around the possibility of some great force governing the hugeness, the strength at which we gazed? Or was he thinking back in the recesses of his mind to conjure up animals which he had known on the veld and with which he had done battle?

A whiff of meat that had grown old came to us and was gone. A passing sigh of wind. I made a mental note to have the camp cleaned the next morning. Shamanyati did not notice. It was a familiar smell to him. It was to me also, but I reacted against it. A dog awoke, stretched himself, and flopping over slept again. His tongue hung out, its tip touching the dust.

Shamanyati straightened and, pouring himself a pile of snuff, looked up at me, his face wrinkled and serious. I stared back, smiling. I loved that dirty old man for all his pock marks and ash-covered thigh and arms. He had been sleeping next a fire

as the old love to do. His face cracked into a smile. Then he raised his cupped hand and transferred the snuff into his nose with a noisy sniff.

“It was on a day following a night such as this that I found fresh bull buffalo tracks along the edge of the 'saka just behind the village.” Shaman-yati had begun his story again. “I was following my line of pitfalls. They were all empty. The game was out on the flats. The big bull had walked around the end of the last set of pits. He had gone slowly, sure that the ground under him was sound. At the edge of the 'saka I found many more tracks, all old. The bull came that way often. I was surprised, for I thought that I knew all the buffalo roads. But in a country a hunter knows well there are often many things which he sees and remembers not.

“The sun had not risen far. The veld still held the smoky haze that lies over the country at the end of the dry season. The buffalo that had left those tracks could not be far ahead of me. Probably it was a bull from the Great Herd separated for a day or two to run by himself. A bull who would know all of this country even better than I, Shamanyati, could know it. I sat down and took snuff. As I sat examining the loading of my gun,

for at that time I had one of those guns you load from the front,<sup>1</sup> some people from the village passed me. They were looking for roots and bark. I told them of the buffalo bull which had passed, and also laughingly told them to stop on their return to help carry back the meat. They went off joking and I started after the bull.

“There was little wind. What there was drifted down the length of the 'saka. I tested its direction carefully with light dust and then with snuff. The tracks I followed led straight into the 'saka. Then they turned and led up into the wind. It was an old bull and wise that I was following. I wondered if it might be Bong'kwé. If it was I would hunt him just the same as any other bull. For he was old now and had lived for a long time as a single bull. I, too, had lived and hunted for a long time. Instead of following those tracks leading so invitingly up the 'saka against the wind, I carefully worked my way straight across. The 'saka was not very thick. In many places I could walk upright. Yet it took a long time for me to reach the farther side. Every step I searched the ground for the tracks of a bull buffalo coming down the wind. Several such I

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<sup>1</sup>Muzzle loader.

found, but they were not fresh, and I would move again, carefully avoiding dry leaves or twigs which would make a noise if stepped upon.

“In the open on the far side I walked up the edge of the 'saka a short distance and then entered it again. It was thicker here and I moved very slowly. Bushes bare of leaves but full of dry twigs crowded under the taller trees. Liana hung in loops and snares. In many places I crawled, but not until I had carefully searched the 'saka ahead. It is neither wise nor pleasant to be caught by some large animal when crawling on your hands and knees. Although I searched more carefully than before, I found no tracks. The sun was well up when I came out, and my body ran with sweat. Dirt and bits of sticks and leaves stuck to me. I examined my gun again to be certain that there was no dirt in the barrel, or any twigs under the hammer.

“I felt certain that the bull I was tracking was in the 'saka. There were other small 'sakas about—dense ones that were dark and smelly inside. But a buffalo will choose a large 'saka to lie up in during the heat of the day unless it is molested or knows that men are near.

“Again I entered the 'saka. The bull must be

near me now, I thought, and worked my way more slowly, more cautiously than ever. For long periods I stood or squatted and listened for any sound or noise that might tell me where my buffalo was. There was not a sound. No tick bird twittered. The ground even was silent, for I lay flat and listened for the stamp or scrape of a hoof. The sun poured down. Sweat ran off me in blobs and caused my eyes to smart. I shifted my gun from one hand to another. Once or twice I rubbed my hands in the dirt to obtain a more secure grip on the steel. Then I would slip forward and search the ground.

"I'nkos, I must have taken the time it requires to smoke a pipe to penetrate halfway into the 'saka on that third trip. But for all my care I lost. There was a bare spot ahead of me at the base of a large tree which the animals used for rubbing. I moved ahead more quickly. Just as I straightened I saw the fresh tracks I had been seeking. The bull had come down the wind as I had believed he would and had passed between me and the little clearing. I bent down to look. There was a crash. Bushes snapped and heavy hoofs pounded the ground. I ran into the clearing. I was too late. The bull had either seen me or gotten my wind.



"Animals are clever, I'nkos. I had thought to beat that buffalo. I knew that unless he left the 'saka he would go upwind and then come back down and stand. That was why I cut back and forth. Even with all my care he had bested me.

"I ran to the spot from which the crashes had come. Picking up the spoor, I followed it quickly. The sun was too hot for the bull to run far and he could not know whether I was a hunter looking for him or just a man crossing through the 'saka. I believed that he would stand again before going far. The tracks reached the edge of the 'saka, went out into the open, and then returned to the thick stuff. I did not. Seeing that the buffalo had gone back into the 'saka I went well away from it and hurried down to the end. There below the wind I crossed through. There were no tracks. The bull, unless he had left the 'saka on the pitfall side, which I did not believe, was still inside.

"I sat down to cool off and to give the buffalo an opportunity to recover from his scare and become drowsy. The sun was well up now. I moved around the tree against which I was leaning in order to keep in the shade. The haze had gone, burnt away by the sun. In its place had come low, entangled

heat waves that wobbled and danced, distorting the veld. The small gray ant-hills which dotted the veld appeared to move. I knew that heavy lumps of dirt could not shift of their own accord. Yet they did. Tree trunks cut themselves in two or grew absurd, sharp bends. I marked an oribi lying down. Its brilliant orange-red coat stood out sharp against the gray and black of the veld. Then it vanished though it had not moved. I knew that it had not moved, for I saw it again a moment later lying asleep as before.

“I got up, and after bending a few times to take the stiffness out of my bones, entered the 'saka. As I have told you it was not a wide one. I searched it. Every clump of brush, every tree, every patch of grass that had escaped burning I watched or passed through. The bull was some place in the end of the 'saka. He would not expect a hunter to go around and come at him upwind. He was standing hidden somewhere where he could see but could not easily be seen. More important, he was somewhere where anyone passing or approaching above the wind was bound to give his keen nostrils the warning of scent which is infallible.

“Backwards and forwards, to and fro I crawled

and slipped. I squatted and searched the 'saka ahead. I listened. I sounded the ground. Gradually I was moving up the long stretch of bush. The bull could not be behind me. I had been too careful. He must be ahead. The sweat was pouring off me. I chewed on some bitter leaves I found and they caused the spit to run in my mouth. I came to the place where I had first entered the 'saka and passed on. Some birds were drowsing in a tree. I slipped past them so quietly not one awoke. Then I picked up the trail of the buffalo coming across the 'saka. He had not gone downwind, as I had thought that he would, but had cut in straight and turned up the wind on the opposite side of the 'saka. I trailed him. But slowly, so slowly. The chances which had been in my favor were now in his. He would be watching his tracks. Yet I dared not leave them. The chances of finding the exact spot where he was standing were slim unless I spooed him. At least the wind was in my favor. I went on. From one bush to another I stepped, pushing my way softly through the tangle. I stepped over logs, crawled under trees that had been blown down. I reached the dense patch of 'saka again. The tracks led into it, but I

felt that he would not be in there. It was the most likely place. It was full of twigs and leaves which would make a noise if anyone tried to pass through. Yet I knew in some way that my bull was not there. So I passed around. As I came to the far side I very slowly edged myself around some bushes. There, looking not at me but at the other side of the thick patch, was a huge bull buffalo. I must have made a sound behind the thick stuff. He was expecting me, but from another direction.

“It required a long time for me to raise my gun. Sunlight might shine from the barrel. A quick movement might catch the bull’s eye. As I slowly drew the gun up I studied the animal in front of me. It looked like Bong’kwé. It was a bull, hairless and long-legged from its right. I could not see much of it—only the head with its heavy boss and curving horns, the neck, and a point of one shoulder. Its feet, too, I could see, but the body was hidden behind bushes.

“My gun was up. I aimed for the point between the neck and the shoulder. The hide is very thick there, as thick as my hand. But behind lie the heart and lungs. From my position if the bullet went true

I should hit the lungs. And I was close. So close that even a gun such as mine should have sufficient power to penetrate and kill.

"I fired. I heard the bullet hit. The bull grunted savagely, bucked, then wheeled and fled. But not before I had seen seven long, white marks running from its shoulder down its side. It was Bong'kwé whom I had hit.

"I ran to the tracks and followed quickly. Within a few paces blood showed—light red blood full of froth and air: the blood that comes through the mouth from a wound in the lungs. Darker dabs here and there were blood from the outside where the bullet had struck going in. I halted to reload and wait.

"With that shot through him Bong'kwé could not go far. I should have left him and returned the next day to pick up what remained. Instead I followed. At first I went swiftly, for Bong'kwé had run mad with anger and hurt. Flecks of blood-stained foam hung from twigs. Every now and then he coughed up globs of blood that lay on the trail and quivered as I hurried past. My thighs and leg became covered with blood. I hurried, not caring about the noise. The tracks were deep and far



apart. Once they wavered as if Bong'kwé had been about to fall. But on they went. I should have heeded that wavering. But as the tracks were deep-driven I spooed quick and fast. It was easy. There was so much blood.

“Then suddenly the tracks doubled back. I stopped, only to go on again more carefully. Still Bong'kwé was moving fast. I lost my caution. I hurried. The 'saka was not as thick as it had been. There was an ant-hill or two about. I was rounding one of these. There was a rush of hoofs from behind. I whirled and tried to jump. I was too late. Bong'kwé, coming from behind the ant-hill, was on me. I saw his head go down for the toss, and then I was flying through the air. I lit hard against a small tree. I still clutched my gun, for as yet I was conscious of no pain. Then Bong'kwé was on top of me again. All that I remember is a terrific shock as he hooked me from the ground, a pounding in my head, and then a fearful pain through my shoulder.

“The time could not have been long. Just a flash. But I remember looking at Bong'kwé from the bushes amongst which I was lying. He was standing not far from me, swaying on his feet. Blood poured from his mouth and nose. He was dead but not

dead! His eyes, red and sullen, looked a hate and hopelessness I never want to see again. He could not move. He was too near death to do anything but hate.

“I still had my gun. I dragged it up to my shoulder and pulled the trigger. A click. The gun was smashed. I tried to yell. I must have made some sound, for the root party near by heard and eventually found us. Bong'kwé was dead. I could not speak and was near death myself for many days. But although I was so sick I could neither talk nor listen, I knew Bong'kwé was dead. I saw him die. As I lay in the bushes with my broken gun the hate faded from his eyes. A film came over them. The glare with which he had fixed me disappeared. He lurched forward as if to maul me again. But he fell, and as his nose ploughed up the ground I lost sight and did not awaken until long afterwards. Then I was here in the village and my old wife was pouring water over the hole in my shoulder.”

Shamanyati rose slowly and stood by the heap of coals. As he gazed out over the silent flats he looked older and more bent than before. I sat silent, watching him. Abruptly he turned and looked down at me.

“I’nkos,” he said, “that is the story of Bong’kwé and of these.” He touched his scars gently. “But do not think I hate him. Rather I miss him. For he was a great buffalo, and although he died hating me he was right. For I did not need to kill him and it was I who provoked him.”

He stood silent a moment. Then, twitching his cape about him, Shamanyati shuffled off into the darkness.

THE END



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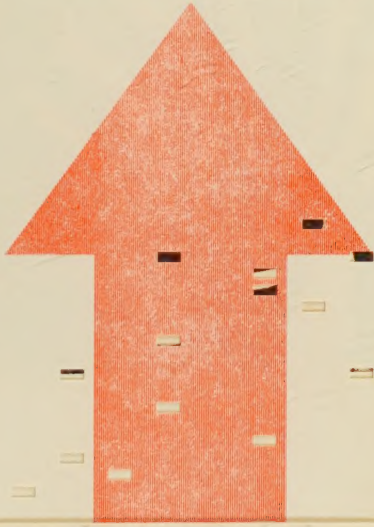
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HUBBARD H. D. BONG



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